

Project Harmony: A Study of Game Design

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

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Abstract

Games, although perhaps seen by many as a pastime or leisure activity can, via their design, communicate to an audience a set of beliefs or ideas about how the designer sees the world. This can be done to great effect, but we feel that there are very few games with an overt social conscience. So, with Project: Harmony, we attempted to craft a game that broached these subjects, providing much needed catharsis for our university experience, and allowed us to model the game design process as a whole.

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Garrett Evers

A Reflection on Project: Harmony

The development of Project: Harmony has been the most difficult and the most rewarding experience of my college experience. It helped me solidify my future pursuits and also served as much needed catharsis.

The birth of Project Harmony it is strongly tied to La'Vonte's and my perception of the world and our experiences in it. My mind immediately flashes back to us sitting in our dorm at the Indiana Academy during our senior year with a friend of ours (who was also a person of color) talking about experiences in school, at home, and our larger place in the society. We talked about how we often felt we were on the outside looking in whether it was due to race, socioeconomics, or education. I was drawn to my friends by our shared strife and our attempts wrestle with them. I personally felt I was trying to ride a line between black and white culture in an uncanny middle ground, which ultimately resulted in a feeling of isolation that I didn't know if it was internally or externally imposed. In addition to this higher education always made me feel like outsider, especially when the topics my friends and I dive into would come up. I would be sitting in a classroom surrounded by individuals with skin colors different than mine as they glance at me hoping I would chime in on the topic. I felt a pressure as their only point of contact to synthesize the entire black experience, that I felt isolated from, so that they could at least try to understand how African-Americans feel. These perceptions made me feel it was my duty to serve as the voice for the minority.

My decision to pursue higher education was largely a gamble that I would have more rich discussions, increase my time with those I felt comfortable, and gain some direction for my professional future, while minimizing the uncomfortable feelings I had experienced in my prior education. To this end I pursued mathematics and joined the Honors College. My frustration with my major was I felt we do not put out enough into the world for others to use. It seemed the job of the mathematician is to sit an ivory tower thinking and testing and the application of that knowledge is a happy chance that is left to others. In some regards I feel I may have misled myself by not pursuing a major in a field that is based on

occurrences in the real world, but I feel we all have some sort of duty to our fellow man. In regards to my Honors college experience, it turned out these would mimic those of my time at the Indiana Academy. While being here I still felt a duty to be the voice for minorities that were not represented. I was not prepared for the apathy that was present in class discussion, where I feel individuals really develop ideas and opinions. Rarely, it seemed no one had an idea that they would actively defend unless it had been stated by the professor in a previous lecture or discussion. Coupling these issues together made me feel like the purpose of academia is to propagate academia.

The strongest catalyst for Project: Harmony in my mind was one evening La'Vonte, Alexis (my girlfriend), and I were walking home and we almost resolved to leave academia. We had realized that in the pursuit of bettering our skills through higher education we had created a rift marred by vague theory and information we could attain in our own studies. We were supposed to better our critical thinking skills, but it felt my job was to memorize facts to regurgitate on an exam. The other side of our education seemed like vocational training where we are trained to use equipment and software that will be obsolete in three to five years. In the sea of risk and probability it seemed a diploma did not grant a high enough chance of achieving success or happiness.

In attempt to quell these feelings La'Vonte and I resolved to create an experience through our Honors theses that would recenter us academically and put us on track for life outside of school. Arguably Project: Harmony would not have existed unless we had taken Dr. Paul Gestwicki's Honors colloquium on game design. It is there that I began to learn how to articulate my feelings about games in an abstract way that others who know the language could understand. I began to realize there are elements in games that I like that help me care about them or make them feel foreign. I think the ultimate goal of the course was to teach the class that for a game to work with an audience the makers have to realize the legitimacy of their platform when it comes to delivering a message. I think this is why I partook in Dr. Gestwicki's game development studio course to see a set of core ideas transform into a product that conveys those ideas. In this interdisciplinary studio class 11 students and our faculty mentor, Dr. Gestwicki, worked

together to create a game for the Muncie Sanitary District and Stormwater Management's summer program, Camp Prairie Creek, for youth 1st through 8th grade. We coordinated with Stormwater Educator, Jason Donati. It was not only a venture in software design or game design, but a unification of critical thinking and real-world experience. I felt like an adult working to improve the world, and I wished more of my time in college had been like this. With our experiences in game design La'Vonte and I realized we could convey the thoughts we've had since high school in a medium that we felt connected to.

Some of my greatest memories come from play experiences with La'Vonte. Whether it was us playing the story mode in *Halo* or *Resident Evil* and even the multiplayer in the former. Or trying to put our heads together to figure out strategies for *Overwatch*, no matter the challenge we were trying to solve it together. This shared experience is a cornerstone to our friendship and it only seemed natural to try and create a play experience similar to our own. I wanted Project: Harmony to encapsulate what made playing games with him feel so good.

The form of Project: Harmony was beginning to take form. We wanted a narrative-based experience that two individuals played together that presented a worthwhile message. We also wanted to tackle gender representative game. The message we arrived upon was one rooted in the issues we faced every day, racism and socioeconomic disparities. When making the cooperative element we constantly thought of the story mode for *Halo 4*, which includes a multiplayer option but it doesn't amount to more than you two playing as differently colored Master Chiefs instead of one. And whenever a scene would render on screen the second player would be removed showing only one Master Chief. We recognized we should avoid this route because it demeans the experience of the second player within the context of the story. They become little more than an extension of the first player. A slightly better example is *Legend of Zelda: Tri Force Heroes*, since each player is presented as an individual. However, there is a deemphasized narrative and greater focus on players solving puzzles together. Each player has their role using an item they receive at the start of a level that must be used and each link has the ability to pick up another stack of links as long as they are not being carried themselves. The game required the players to

form a stack 3 Links high and the top Link would have to shoot the enemy. We found ourselves scrambling to get the person with the best aim on top and the person with the best movement on bottom, but our slow reaction time and the speed of the enemy's attacks forced us to form the stack as fast as possible. Our triumphs using each item made us feel like we were contributing to the team and not just an extension of an original Link.

The first idea we came up was based upon *Tri Force Heroes* because it seemed simple. It was going to be a *Legend of Zelda* style game played by two people side-by-side. At the start we realized a game like *Legend of Zelda* did not facilitate the type of story we were interested. Most the emphasis was being placed on how players' mechanics worked together and interactions with enemies. In addition, this game would require us to learn a completely new development environment and to produce a significant amount of content just to have a basic proof of concept in a digital space. Pursuing this route would have also put us way over the Honors Colleges deadline. We quickly settled upon the bulk of the gameplay would take place in a physical medium. This guaranteed we could rapidly create and test a prototype that would not require hours of additionally time learning how to write the code.

After we settled on a physical medium we figured out how we could institute our cooperative game play style. Gestwicki pointed out it wasn't about the importance of cooperative or solo options, but the validity of making a choice to work together or apart. In games like *Dungeons & Dragons* it is not about whether the party stays together or separate, rather the implicit decision each player has to departure or stay in the party. We felt a game that leaned more towards *Dungeons & Dragons* would offer a more fruitful space. This is when we found our footing and began prototyping at a faster rate. We were able to meet on a Friday specify the new features La'Vonte and I were going to design and then we would pass judgement on the feature on a Wednesday. In these meetings we would decide what we would continue to pursue within the context of our design goals and the existing game. The basis for the two main characters was designed in one afternoon, we came up with a character that comes from the country and has lived outside of the main culture while the other character desperately wanted to be included in

the society that they are not from. From there we began to prescribe different traits found in RPGs to each of them until we arrived at the final characters. Pusha the “tank” type who can withstand and protect a lot of damage and deal a bunch damage but not very quickly, and Slant a “rogue support” with healing and utility abilities while still dealing a sufficient amount of damage. With Dr. Gestwicki’s words in mind on worthwhile cooperative play we developed meaningful mechanics for solo and cooperative. We introduced more abilities that increased player interactions and added revive mechanic so that if a character has been knocked unconscious they can be brought back at an expense to the character performing the revival. Simultaneously, we made the choice to tackle a dungeon solo more lucrative and at less of a penalty on a loss, but the difficulty would be increased. Players also had abilities specific to whether they were solo or working cooperatively. All of this allowed the characters to make decisions that are beneficial to themselves or to the group.

As the creators of Project: Harmony the interactions we have with our players is limited to the context of the game we create, ultimately interpretation is up to the end user. In this regard we may have been too ambitious in our goals of passing on our own experience. To this end we drew parallels between the events in our world and that of Project: Harmony’s world. Most notable is the strife the goblins face. I view their situation similar to minorities living in a post-racial world today where the goblins must forget their history and the humans will forget theirs so that they can all get along; however, the humans will not lose all of their history instead they will become the dominant culture. Also, the nature of the world is similar to our own. Groups reluctantly interact with each other when they need to trade but for the most part they live in isolated communities, but inside there are some towns that prosper because they lie near the borders where trade occurs.

On the topic of gender, I think we could have done more. At the very least we presented female characters, however, I don’t know if that is a solution. I think we had moments that mirrored issues in our own society without being too overt, but these moments shared similarities with moments of covert racism. I think we ultimately approached the topic carefully trying to portray what we have learned. I

believe my frustrations with how we handle gender tie into a larger issue with how our game is constructed. Originally, we set out to create a game that could be part of creating social change. But I believe we should have rewrote our original intentions to be smaller and to focus more on creating empathy in individuals on our topic. I think this type of goal would have been more achievable, because it would have narrowed our focus from three subjects to one. I think, ultimately, we have narratives that fluctuates from solid to weak at times, which is partially due to us being a small team. If we were a studio with a writing staff our narrative could have gained the amount of focus needed. However, a story focused just on empathy could have been shorter and more focused.

So, another larger issue that was unavoidable was the size of our team. I think La'Vonte and my perception may have been a little foolish. We did not realize what is needed to make a game. We believed with our skill sets and experience we could accomplish what a team of six to ten developers could do but on a reduced scale, but in creating a game you can reduce the scale but depth is still required. We were not able to fully flush out the mechanics we created specifically the character interaction system. I believe the character interactions we have throughout the story do not have a great enough impact on the players experience in regards to our creative goal. Specifically, the social system did not present our feelings on racism properly.

We had originally wanted a parody system where characters have different interactions based on their previous actions, thus there would be a chain of consequences and rewards that the player could examine and relate to their choices. However, pursuing this would have consumed more resources than we had available. We also could not create a branching story using our physical medium.

Ultimately Project: Harmony is played like a book with some extra cards and combat. This made for long moments where the player would be reading exposition. It is more of a power trip for players than a practice in empathy. Even though we knew a general flow for our story, we did not know how to smoothly pull together the various components. We did not effectively incorporate our message into the

mechanics we have, thus shifting the focus of the player towards optimizing how they use the games mechanics.

Project: Harmony can only be appreciated in its entirety. We may have failed in creating a compelling game, but we did create a story that has moments that two players experience together. These moments may be combat or realizations about their place in the larger world. We spent too much time making a complete story that we thought equated to being finished, but we forgot what a meaningful coop play experience feels like. If we had cut down to one act and worried less about finishing and more on our craft, I think we could have had a more interesting game. We tainted what we set out to make with a false sense of what it means to finish. Just like my time in higher education, this game reminded me that the road to happiness and success are hard to plan, but we can recognize them when we see them. This tantalizing pot of gold led us astray with false expectations. Maybe it was our own hubris and inability to accept failure that made Project: Harmony feel like a hole that needed to be filled. We should have focused on making something interesting to ourselves. I have great memories of the games I shared with La'Vonte. Though we did not capture that in game, but in the process of making Project: Harmony I experienced some of those moments that seem so long ago.

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La’Vonte Pugh

On the Process and Ideation of *Project: Harmony*

My work on *Project: Harmony* has been one of the most challenging, yet, enlightening experiences I’ve had in my academic career. From the initial idea to realization, shaping *Project: Harmony’s* world has tested me and my partner Garrett’s abilities in ways that I’m sure we hadn’t imagined months ago as we excitedly talked about the possibility of creating a game.

To start, the original idea that became *Project: Harmony* stemmed from a series of conversations Garrett and I had over the course of our six or so year friendship. Beginning in high school, we would often drift in and out of deliberations on race, religion, academia, self-worth, and so on. As we matured, so did our ideas, and so did our desire to explore them. On my end, I suppose the drastic changes that came with leaving my home—culture shock, acceleration of my own depression, a shift from experiencing covert to overt racism in some cases—pushed these topics to the forefront of my mind as I transitioned into adulthood. I remember thinking to myself that it seemed as if the entire world was cursed with the hatred and prejudice that our societies were built on, and that I wanted to somehow encapsulate my thoughts in something tangible.

That consideration, combined with my love for writing and storytelling seemed to suggest that I might write a novel, or perhaps a screenplay. Honestly, I considered these avenues, but was never inspired enough by the *act* to actually commit to the ideas. So, an exploration of these topics stayed stagnant, until the first half of my senior year of college. During this time, I confess that I was perhaps fed up with school. I was ready to face the world, and becoming increasingly impatient with academia and the looming prospect of eking out my existence solely in the Midwest. Where I had been eager to face the challenges of post-racial America in my high school and early college years, by that point I was done with the whole thing. I wanted out, and seriously toyed with the idea of dropping everything and moving far, far away. Of course, the 2016 election did not help with these feelings. I remember a particular

conversation I had with Garrett and Alexis, his partner, one rainy day while walking to my house. We talked about our increasing frustration with school, and our eagerness to get out into the world and start *doing things*. It seemed like academia was an endless echo chamber of theory with no real application. We thought about all of the people who had made successful lives *without* a diploma—much less an honors diploma—and how it seemed like the people who made the biggest difference in their lives were the ones who took the biggest chances. I realized that I didn't necessarily care if I succeeded at what I wanted to do, so long as I tried, and at that point, sitting in class everyday didn't feel like trying.

Fighting off the urge to go AWOL, Garrett and I decided that we would do something ambitious for our honors theses. We would work together at something far out of either of our abilities: crafting, from scratch, an entire game. To be fair, we had been tossing this idea around for years as a potential side project, but it wasn't until we took Paul Gestwicki's game design colloquium. During that course, game design emerged to me as more than just entertainment, it became an avenue for legitimate discourse. Although some might argue, I saw the strength of game design as an academic medium throughout all stages: the ideation, creation, iteration, and eventual consumption. So, our goal was to channel our thoughts, and every skill and lesson we had learned throughout our college careers. That I am writing this paper should suggest, at least to a degree, that we were successful.

I will be the first to admit that our initial idea for *Project: Harmony* was incredibly ambitious, and that attempting to fit it into the constraints of time and our obligations as honors students was our first lesson. It was quite easy to dream up the world that would become *Project: Harmony*. We had spent hours tossing ideas back and forth as to every aspect that this world would encompass. The fact that the game needed to exist physically by a certain point in time, however, forced us to reassess what was really important in terms of this project. For example: The early concept was of a *Legend of Zelda* like game that played out on dual screens. It would have been an action RPG with strong puzzle and combat elements that forced players to work as a team to complete the game. The genre came about from Garrett and my mutual love of the action RPG genre (particularly *The Legend of Zelda, Ocarina of Time*). The

cooperative focus, on the other hand, came out of our desire for a game that was truly cooperative. That is, we longed for a game that was built for two people to experience and overcome together. So, the play experience had to be tailored to two people being able to act separately and in tandem, with both players' actions being meaningful. We had played games like *Halo*, which do include cooperative modes, but for the most part, it just meant that there were *two* Master Cheifs instead of *one*. In our opinion, that wasn't real cooperative, because the second player did not exist from a narrative standpoint. Games like *Resident Evil 5* and *6* were slightly better—each player was a distinct character, but even so they had flaws. In reality, since the game was initially built for a single player, there were limitations that we felt didn't make sense for truly cooperative experiences. So, in the case of *Resident Evil 5*, during one section the players are split up and one of them must navigate zombie filled building to open a door at the bottom while the other must provide cover fire. In game, the smaller, lighter character is the one that must navigate the building (she is literally thrown across a balcony into the building), while the bulkier one protects her. Where there is some apparent logic to how this scene plays out, in our minds, it seemed strange that the game didn't give players the option to decide which character had to go through the building. Perhaps the player controlling the smaller character is a better shot. Perhaps the larger character had better armor equipped. This sort of limitation is common, even amongst games like *Resident Evil 5* that, admittedly, do work hard to make the cooperative experience meaningful.

Pursuing this cooperative concept naturally made how we designed our game incredibly important. As Gestwicki would stress to us, it was not only important for there to be cooperative and solo options, but there should be compelling reasons for each. Taking cooperativity as a main facet meant that we had to spend more time on how we presented the game. If we had continued with the idea of making an action RPG video game, I am certain we wouldn't have finished by our deadline. Not only would making such a game take a long time, it didn't necessarily support our desires more than other kinds of games. In the cooperative space in particular, we realized that we could do our idea justice in other genres.

In addition, we wanted to focus heavily on story with *Project: Harmony*. The reason for this went back to a couple of things. Firstly, we felt that most games that were cooperative either (1) contained the ludo-narrative dissonance mentioned in the *Halo* example, or (2) did away with narrative to focus on the multiplayer interaction. This type of multiplayer, as in games like *Minecraft*, shift responsibility to the players themselves to form the narrative. While these kinds of games are fun, the level of discourse possible within them is understandably limited.

So, with cooperativeness and narrative at the forefront, it became clear that another genre, the tabletop RPG genre, might serve us better. From my standpoint, this genre offered several advantages against a digital game. Firstly, I believe tabletop games are easier to do rapid prototyping with, a concept widely discussed in *How to Prototype a Game in Under 7 Days* on the *Gamasutra* blog. There, the authors discuss how important it is to quickly develop and test ideas, encouraging creative risk taking. During our own process, Garrett and I set limits for how long game systems could be developed before they needed to either be fully implemented, or thrown out. For example, when revamping the combat system for *Project: Harmony*, I started from scratch, throwing away everything we had done previously and focusing on retooling combat to be quick, fun, and easily understandable. Within 20 minutes or so, I had created the combat system that *Project Harmony* now uses. I suppose one could consider this sort of rapid development prone to mistakes or laziness, but I believe having to work quickly helped us condense our ideas down to core elements. We knew we wanted cards, dice (but not too many), and the ability to strategize with each other. By not lamenting on the systems for days, as we had in earlier iterations of the game, we avoided making systems too complicated to test effectively.

The aforementioned *Gamasutra* article also mentions constraints as an engine for creativity, which was a theme from the original *Project: Harmony* that carried over into the new iteration and was made more prominent. We really wanted it to be clear to the player that the game's protagonists—Pusha, a level-headed brawler traveling in search of her missing brother, and Slant, a temperamental mage with a troubled past—were made to work together. So, instead of making both characters interchangeable, we

looked at them as if they were “classes” in a traditional RPG game. Pusha was considered a “tank” kind of character, so she could deal and take a lot of damage, while Slant was considered to be more of a “support” character, so she heals and provides utility. That basis largely informed everything about the characters that we developed, even down to certain aspects of their personalities. We hoped that it would be interesting to experiment with how the characters worked together and how individual players’ play styles influenced their choices, given that their character is capable, but clearly flawed. Even more intriguing to us, then, was how players would use the characters in a solo environment, given that the game allows for large sections to be played without the other player.

Returning to the idea of meaningful cooperative play, we worked to make choice to play solo one that players would seriously consider. This was another suggestion by Gestwicki that drove major elements of the game. Sure, a focus was on making cooperative play gratifying, but it also became important from a gameplay standpoint to present the players with the opportunity to deviate from that. In our game, items are bought using gems, which are primarily earned from battle. when playing as a duo, each player can support the other and revive them if they are defeated. In addition, the players have more freedom when working as a duo. When solo, however, the game is more punishing, but battles reward players with more loot, and the penalty for losing is reduced. So, it becomes a serious choice whether to tackle each room in a dungeon together or separately, knowing that there will be significantly higher rewards.

Beyond cooperation, there were also the societal issues that we had hoped to explore throughout our game. Perhaps the most easily recognizable issues dealt with in the game are with race and gender. In regards to race, we painted a world that we hoped people would find parallel with our own in. For example, goblins in our world live primarily in a place called “the Wilds”, a zone separate from, but inside humans’ sphere of influence. Despite once ruling the land in which the game takes place and having established most of the major systems and technologies that humans use, the goblin race has been more or less slaves to them for generations, and thus hold very little power. They work across the land,

many traveling from the Wilds to work in human cities. In some ways, this was meant to parallel the African American experience, whereas they had been slaves for hundreds of years and are an indelible force in the fabric of America, yet they often seem to have very little determining power. In game, via a war, goblins have won some small amount of autonomy, which is how I see the Civil rights movement in relation to my own race. We have fought tooth and nail for so little and it seems to constantly be slipping away. That we play as humans in game, then, might seem like an odd choice, but the intent is to reflect the complexity of a modern-racially diverse America. The humans we play as are part of a group ostracized in some way from the humans in their capitol. They are outlanders, considered hicks and only a step or so above goblins. How each character realizes their identity then also becomes part of our grand metaphor. Over the course of the game, it should be clear that Pusha finds no fault with being from the outlands, and defends her people, while much of Slant's existence has been dedicated to fitting in with the people in the human capitol, Lafira. Among other things, this represents how the individual self can further complicate issues of race. Just because people share a common lineage does not mean that they have the same outlook about it.

Another topic, gender, was a major issue that we wanted to broach. I should begin by saying that I consider myself entirely unqualified to write from the perspective of a woman, and given that gender is often unspecified in game, one may be permitted to have missed that detail entirely. Still, much of our cast of characters is female. Our goal here was to add to the body of work that casted women in meaningful roles, as well as answering a question we often have with games, books, movies, and so on. In a scenario where a character's gender is not absolutely integral to their character, why not make them female? This is a response to what we consider gross underrepresentation of diverse women in media. So, even though our protagonists may not have traits that the players consider "feminine", they are women, and I believe that is meaningful.

When writing much of the *Project: Harmony* manuscript, I happened to realize how much of our classic storytelling elements are almost inherently based on the male point of view. When thinking of

strong warriors, in my mind I pictured men. When thinking of support-oriented characters, I gravitated to women. Recognizing this flaw then became another important facet in developing *Project: Harmony*. As we created characters to fill our world, it was important to consider how their roles might reinforce gender stereotypes. I hope that we have done a reasonable job mitigating this problem, but this happens to be one part of part of *Project: Harmony* that I would love to revisit in the future, perhaps after consulting various women about my ideas. Better yet, it might be a good idea to collaborate with a female writer to redraft the story in its entirety and help identify where we might have fallen into stereotypes unwittingly.

In developing *Project: Harmony*, the reader might be surprised to learn that *fun* was not a focus. What appeals to one kind of player may not appeal to others, and how players derive fun can vary from literally playing the game to some meta level enjoyment, so we decided that it would be foolish to focus too much on appealing to a people and first develop the systems and structures that we thought would best represent our ideas. In this way, we had hoped to avoid pigeonholing ourselves by thinking too much about accessibility in the early stages of development.

Take a game like Blizzard's first-person shooter, *Overwatch*, for example. It has done a great job capturing hardcore and casual audiences. This is in no small part due to the game's design. Unlike more traditional games in the genre like *Call of Duty* or *Halo* that focus on aim, many *Overwatch* characters do not need to aim their gun, or don't have guns at all. In addition, the primary game-mode is not built around the same kill-or-be-killed "Team Deathmatch" kind of play present in those aforementioned titles, but a more objective-based experience akin to Valve's *Team Fortress 2*, where teamplay and asymmetry is highlighted. This encourages diversity of player type and team cohesion with characters designed to fill niches and work cooperatively with other. For example, the character "Reinhardt" has a massive shield that his teammates can shoot through. Given his defensive capability, he does not have a gun, but rather uses a hammer, which limits his range. The character "McCree" on the other hand, has a revolver that does high damage at range, but his health pool is low and he has few evasive options. Therefore, these

two characters can work in tandem, with Reinhardt shielding McCree while he shoots at enemies from afar. It's this sort of gameplay that makes *Overwatch* so flexible and accessible.

This does not come without drawbacks, however, as the game must always seek to balance accessibility and its hardcore nature. For example, in the fighting-game genre, odd or easily abusable mechanics can become the basis for an entirely new tier of play. Such is the case with *Super Smash Bros Melee*, which was programmed in such a way that a competitive community developed around using its oddities to play in ways that the developer never intended. For example, in *Super Smash Bros*, attacks are directional, meaning the direction you are holding your joystick influences the specific move your character does. This includes not holding a direction at all. In addition, the kind of move your character does changes if your character is running or walking, which is controlled by how far your stick is tilted. There is also a set of attacks called “smash” attacks, that can be used by inputting a direction and the “A” button on your controller. This third set of moves is typically very powerful, but to use them your character has to be standing still. Competitive *Super Smash Bros Melee* players get around this with a technique called “wave-dashing”, which abuses how the game handles character collisions with the ground when dodging, a maneuver that sends one's character in a direction that can be specified by the player. The result is that when the player impacts the ground, they slide. This is not treated the same as if they were moving about the ground normally. Instead, the game treats the character as if it is standing still, which would allow players to access their smash moves while in motion. The added set of usable moves makes the game more flexible overall, giving talented players more options when in a fight.

Such was the nature of the *Overwatch* character Genji, who had some interesting quirks, himself. In a first-person shooting game, this character is one of the few that do not use some kind of gun. His weapon of choice, ninja stars, katana, and a wakizashi— an extremely short-ranged sword—meant that his playstyle developed around getting in close to enemies where he could use his maneuverability to maximize the chance of his ninja stars—which are admittedly difficult to use—hitting the enemy. During this time, it would also be common use his melee attack, a short-ranged ability that nearly everyone in the

game has, to squeeze out extra damage. Due to how the game handled his specific mechanics, he could do some very impressive maneuvers, like double jumping, wall running, and then jumping a third time, in that order. This meant that highly skilled players had very flexible engagement and disengagement tools. In addition, Genji was able to cancel the animations of certain moves, thereby reducing the time between when one move ended and he could perform another. So, at close range he could throw ninja stars, use his melee attack, and then immediately dash through his enemy, dealing a significant amount of damage. If done skillfully, Genji could assassinate targets while simultaneously positioning himself for further actions. Eventually this third jump and the ability to cancel a melee attack into the dash ability were removed, which hurt the high tiers play of play the most by removing such a difficult, but powerful maneuver. In this way, Blizzard went about reigning in the sorts of mechanics that hardcore players make their staple.

Regarding *Project: Harmony*, it could be said that we took the opposite approach. We tinkered with abilities, making them highly flexible with edge cases that could be abused. We really wanted to see what kind of strategies could emerge with these slightly imbalanced systems. For example, the character Slant is supposed to be the weaker of the two protagonists, but we found an exploit early on that allowed us to win fights very easily. Pusha, her partner, had an ability called “inspire” that could increase the max damage possible with Slant’s attacks, effectively covering her weakness. This meant that she could defeat an entire room of enemies with the use of one or two cards in a single turn. This might not have been a major issue, but since the deck size at that point was small and decks were reshuffled before each battle, there was a high chance of drawing the one’s strongest cards early on. Therefore, the strategy emerged where we would put as much into Slant as possible in terms of attack power, making use of the sheer number and strength of cards that she could use to defeat even the most challenging enemies with ease.

Something like this is precisely what we wanted to find, because to us, finding new and powerful ways to play a game is fun. It was enjoyable seeing what kinds of strategies we could put together and how the character’s mechanics could lead to interesting scenarios. This sort of “fun”, in my opinion, is

only really had by certain kinds of players. Returning to *Super Smash Bros Melee* for a moment, it may be enjoyable to “wave-dash” and do other advanced maneuvers to some, but to others it might make what was supposed to be a party game into an unwinnable nightmare. In this case, the gaming adage “Git gud” does not apply, that player will simply move onto other things. Recognizing that was also important to us.

As we were testing systems, we realized that if we wanted other people to enjoy the game, too, then we had to strike some sort of balance. The way I pictured it, a game could be as hardcore or as complicated as a designer wanted it to be, but if they wanted to have more than themselves to play it with, then concessions were necessary. This led to many balance changes like the one mentioned above, all aimed at retaining the spirit of challenging and flexible mechanics while being easier to just pick up and play by anyone. As mentioned above, one could lose a battle without ever having the opportunity to make a move if the enemy side got some lucky rolls. Personally, I felt that this should have been a strong indicator to players that they needed to spend time developing a sound strategy, one that included a way to avoid being killed consistently in the first turn. It reminded me of games like *Persona 3*, by developer Shin Megami Tensei. In that game, you have a team of one to four character that you use to defeat monsters in a tower that increases in difficulty as you climb to the top. On the higher floors, if your team isn’t strong enough or there is a glaring weakness in your team composition, certain monsters can kill everyone in with one attack. This sort of mechanic was exciting to me, and made every turn just slightly tenser. Despite that, we did end up deciding that it would be better to offer players more options so as to remove the potential frustration of consistently losing currency because of poor luck.

Above, we discussed how *Project: Harmony* came to be from a theoretical standpoint, but now I believe it is important to broach the subject of the game as it actually is. Specifically, we must discuss the various successes and failures Garrett and I had while developing *Project: Harmony*, as it will be useful in making conclusions about the game design process as a whole.

Broadly speaking, our most important success is that we consider our game complete, with a fully realized narrative and systems to accompany it. Originally, our goal was to create a demo, or a proof of

concept, that would showcase our ideas and encapsulate a small portion of what could become a larger game. Considering that the original *Project: Harmony* was intended to be digital, this made sense. It would have likely taken us the entire semester just to have twenty full minutes of content. This is not to say that there is no merit in a proof of concept. For one, it would have allowed us to focus narrowly on crafting a demo that was feature-rich and gave players a clear idea of how a longer game could play.

As Professor Gestwicki noted, however, delivering a finished product is harder, yet more rewarding. In an intentionally incomplete project, we could load up that particular section with as many interesting story beats and mechanics that we want, knowing that the narrative isn't expected to resolve by the end and that players will enjoy having new tools to tinker with so often. I believe this is partly how many games that seemed fun during the opening sequences become dull later. After so long, if the player is not introduced to more challenges or unique experiences, they can become bored. So, it is more useful of a lesson to attempt to make three hours' worth of interesting content versus thirty minutes. In this way, our ability to craft a story and give it momentum was tested. Personally, up until this point, I had never written more than 15 pages of narrative. To be sure, I have written a fair bit in college and consider myself competent enough to draft interesting story elements, but the 60+ pages that *Project: Harmony* became was a major stretch. By necessity, *Project: Harmony* could not be a few hours of constant fighting, or it would feel empty, but it also couldn't only consist of exposition, or it would feel like a bad novel. We had to strike a careful balance, structuring the encounters and story content so that they flow.

Honestly, I don't believe we were prepared for the undertaking that writing a tabletop RPG would be. As a result, I feel that *Project: Harmony's* story is at times boring, with too much to read and too little to do. With our limited resources, we opted for a linear narrative, which let us craft the experience as we saw fit. Our original desire was to provide the players with more choice, giving them multiple, branching pathways that made their choices feel like they actually affected the story. This, we soon found, would eat up more time than we had to work on *Project: Harmony*.

Another notable success was how we managed to revamp the entirety of the game's core systems. As discussed at length above, our original game (which can be found in the appendix) was far too complicated, with systems that did not support our project design goals. There was an incredibly high learning curve and a lot of accounting--keeping track of health values and so on--to do. This is because the system was modeled after video game RPGs. So, when we rebuilt it from the ground up, we kept the tabletop environment in full consideration. Simple math (if any) consistent dice rolls with clear logic, straightforward combat, these considerations made our game significantly more enjoyable.

Combat-wise, I would argue that this is where we saw the most success. The new system is leaner and allowed for us to add mechanics on top of the core that were useful without overcomplicating things. This was especially important because, to emulate RPG video games, we found it best to have many things determined wholly or partly by dice rolls. This was true for the original *Project: Harmony* as well, but a key difference is that the redesigned system allows the player some control over the randomness. For example, an enemy might have 8 "DEF", which means we need to roll an 8 or higher to defeat that enemy. So, say we have a sword that does 2D6 damage, which will get us some value between 2 and 12. The odds that we will get 8 or above is roughly 42%, which is not ideal if we absolutely need to defeat that enemy. So, using our systems, we could play a card that boosted our "DMOD"—which tells the player how many dice of a certain type to roll to calculate damage—perhaps increasing our total roll to 3D6, giving us a roughly 84% chance at success. In addition, we could use a card that directly increased our attack. +6 to any attack would make it impossible to not destroy the enemy so long as our DMOD involved at least 2 dice. Thus, in a system fraught with randomness, the strategy comes from how you mitigate it. Knowing that our damage values can vary, we can build our deck of cards with skills that aid attack rolls, or give us multiple chances to land that value that we need. The same would indeed go for defensive actions. Since we know an enemy always has some probability of exceeding our own DEF value, we can take actions to keep that from happening, at least until we can exceed theirs.

One major issue that did arise with the newly revamped system has to do with dealing with dice in the first place, and since our systems are almost entirely based on them, it has been the hardest to work with. Every character has at least a DMOD that they use to calculate damage, and a DEF number, that must be exceeded to defeat them. Therefore, it becomes incredibly precarious to balance these two values and how they interact. This is because the DMOD has the potential to both greatly exceed or undershoot one's DEF value, so it is hard to tell what may be too high or too low of a DMOD. This is exemplified in the "Knife Storm" card, which originally did 3D6 damage to all enemies, that is, between 3 and 18 damage to every enemy on the field. It was intended to pick off weaker enemies around the 10-12 DEF range, but during playtests, it would consistently roll high and wipe out all of the enemies in a battle, even bosses. If this card was buffed via the effects of another card, then this issue would be exacerbated. In this way, every value for each enemy, weapon, and skill had to be carefully balanced so that the game was not needlessly difficult or exceptionally easy.

To that end, I believe it is impossible for us to find a balance that would not be broken every time a new card or feature was added. If we were to redesign that system, I do have an idea of how we could change it. Some monsters and weapons have DMODs that look like $2D4+6$, whereas there is the standard $x Dy$ dice roll plus n guaranteed damage. This would mean that an attack with that value does 8 to 16 damage, instead of 1 to 8, so it has a more useful and reliable value range. A better form of this system might be attack values like this: $8+1D4$, which would indicate a more stable range of 8-12 damage. This system, of course, might also work better with a revamped defense value system.

From our time working on *Project: Harmony*, successes and failures alike, I believe Garrett and I have learned a great deal about game design that we not have otherwise. A major revelation was the amount of skill and fortitude necessary to carry a project from start to finish. It was easy in the beginning to dream up our world and everything we wanted to put in it, but when it came time to actually create the world, we ran into many roadblocks. What looked like a solid storyline as a bullet point list became clearly flawed when developed into a full narrative. In addition, as we developed the characters'

personalities, the story gradually shifted, making rewrites of the basic outline necessary. The finished manuscript for *Project: Harmony* is so drastically different from our original plans that, when looking at older documents, I am surprised at what we had originally intended to do. I think this has helped me understand how its possible for a game's story to flounder, even when the source material seems rich. Unless there are dedicated writers on the team, crafting the story can be painstaking, and ideas seem to flow a lot faster than ink does, so that when development finally concludes the end result can be unrecognizable from the beginning.

Another major lesson learned is the importance of carefully crafted systems. I remember that Nintendo's game designers often say that they begin with a concept, or a system, and develop the game around that. I did not understand this concept when it was first introduced to me, but it makes total sense now. Development seemed most difficult when we didn't have stable core systems in place. This may be a major reason that the earliest iterations of *Project: Harmony* did not work so well. We started with our big ideas, and tried to graft systems to them that didn't work instead of starting with systems and letting that shape our ideas.

The final major lesson learned is that meaningful cooperative play is incredibly difficult. I believe we were perhaps a bit arrogant in thinking that we could craft a "revolutionary" cooperative game having never developed a game together in our lives. Through this process, I came to realize why so many cooperative games are lacking to a degree. For cooperative gameplay to be at the forefront, there must be major concessions made on the player's part. Players must be willing to trust half of their choices with another person. That person may be on par with their skill, better, or worse, which changes how gameplay sessions may go. In addition, the existence of two important characters means that the story has to, at all times, keep both of them in mind. Going too far into one character's perspective meant that the other would begin to feel incredibly distant, which I believe occurred a few times in our game. This also forces a particular perspective that made writing the narrative difficult. It was written as if it was being spoken directly to the players, which worked fine until Pusha interacted directly with Slant or the other way

around. We had to decide how to communicate this without making one character distant. In the end, we settled on a text color-coding system, which feels more like a band-aid than an actual remedy. What ends up happening is if a certain character does something, the manuscript reads: "You do this." in whatever color that is associated with the character. While this is a simple and reliable way to make sure people know who is being referred to, reading is a bit awkward when one encounters text that was not meant for them to read. Suddenly, that person is made incredibly distant from the piece. This problem is one that I believe digital media handle better. In a cooperative video game, the screen is often divided or the camera is zoomed outward to accommodate more than one player. In addition, characters can be addressed more conventionally without things being confusing. In addition, I believe digital mediums better allow for visual separation of characters, so not only would Slant and Pusha be described as different people, they would look different, with different color palettes, different effects, and so on. Immersion is better preserved because the game designer can show each player different things. For us to have done that, we would have needed to write the manuscript twice!

To conclude, the process and ideation of *Project: Harmony* tested us in every regard. It forced us to push beyond our individual skill-sets to craft a complete experience in a medium that had seemed intriguing, but nebulous to us. To accomplish our goals, we had to cease to be passive consumers and produce a work that could stand on its own. Through this process, however, we developed many of the skills and concepts introduced in Gestwicki's game design class, and managed to derive a stronger understanding of game design as a whole.

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Appendix A- Systems Breakdown and Reference

Simple Systems

1. Traits
2. Assist Cards
 - a. Assist cards allow players to borrow the skills of their allies. Assist cards have variable uses from support to defense to attack. The use of assist cards replaces your physical attack for that turn.

Advanced Systems

1. Combo skills
 - a. Combo skills are powerful abilities that are unlocked by combining multiple cards. Combo cards are specific, and to use them one must have the specific combo card, as well as its constituent cards. For example, to use the "Flame Dragon" card, one must have three "Fire Charge" cards in your hand. Depending on the specific combo card, there will be certain stipulations for its use, but the most common is to have the cards in your hand.
 - i. Combo cards are not drawn nor kept in your deck. They are in your loadout and you can have three of them maximum, unless otherwise stated.
2. Aether Skills
 - i. Aether mode is a state only accessible to Slant via her ties to the Aether magic users of the past. In this mode, Slant gains access to a second class of cards in her deck (Aether Cards), gains an AP boost, but can no longer perform physical attacks or assists.
3. Grapple Skills
 - a. Due to her immense skill and strength, Pusha can grapple most opponents, entering a state where she can access special cards in her deck (Grapple Cards) at the expense of the being automatically attacked by all enemies.
4. Masteries
 - a. Masteries are special loadout cards that can only be purchased after certain requirements have been met (ex. Buy all the items in a town's shop), which can be bought from any shop that sells cards. Masteries grant the player certain abilities including guaranteed damage, auto-dodge, and so on. You can only have one of these cards equipped at a time unless otherwise stated.
5. Honors
 - a. Honors are similar to masteries in that they are only granted after certain requirements have been met. They do not have to be bought, but can only be retrieved outside of dungeons. In general, only one honor is allowed to be equipped at a time.
6. Species Appearance Reference
7. Human: Looks about like what you would expect any normal or slightly abnormal humans to look like.
8. Arcanus: A breed of human typically darker than others with typically striking facial features and very little facial hair. Have a strong enough affinity for an ancient magic to give them a characteristic "aura" ---unless they are cut off from their powers, you can't miss it. Strangely enough, Humans and Arcanus, despite their clear similarities, do not seem able to easily produce mixed offspring. Someone of both races is rare, but this may explain the sometimes sudden occurrence of great psycho-magical ability in certain people.
9. Goblin: Unlike traditional goblins, these creatures vary in size from massive to small and squat, typically with skin in shades of greens and browns. Variations and size, limb count, or other

physical traits largely dependent on parents, as goblin DNA is compatible with most races to some degree or another.

10. Orc: A nearly extinct breed of hyper-goblin that was bred in ancient times to protect the lands as ruled by goblins. Imagine a REALLY, REALLY BIG GOBLIN with exaggerated features.
11. Elves: Small, childlike creatures that can be best describes as "looks like a little kid--but slightly off." Most have ears that come to a point. Seeing an elf in its natural form is quite rare, as they like to shapeshift to a form more suitable for their goals. Excel at spells and augments.
12. Centaurians: A race of magical demi humans that literally are half horse, half human, with the torso of a human connected at the base of the neck of a horse. A variation of these creatures is more akin to goats, with horns and more animalistic facial features.
13. Insectid: The umbrella term for a group of highly intelligent insects that have grown to be massive. The most common are bee and wasp-like insectids, but spider-like insectids have been known to exist.
14. Tohkka (Formerly Gnomes): A race of creatures that appear to be somehow related to humans. They rarely appear in their native form and live in a land separated from Apophis by a massive desert.

Appendix B- Game Manuscript

EPISODE 1: THE WHISTLER IN THE WILDS

Episode 1.1A

Midlands – Kaht Outpost – Ludoc's Inn

[Pusha] You drop your belongings at your feet, settling into your chair with a sigh. You've been traveling for days, searching for your brother, Afi, who disappeared months ago. All you have to go on is an old ring that he left with a strange insignia carved into it. Asking around your hometown, you were told to journey south, but not much more than that. Your travels have brought you to Kaht, a small outpost town towards the edge of the midland. The town is small, but it is home to a fairly well-known inn that sees creatures of many races pass through. Hopefully, you say to yourself, one of them will recognize the markings on the ring and point you to the right direction. Until then, you are resting in the inn's bar, listening to the slow crooning of a giantess and her band. The song eases your mind, but before you can fully settle in, a gangly man in merchant's garb wanders past clutching a satchel to his chest. You follow him with your eyes as he paces the room, staring frantically from side to side. At last, his eyes catch on something out of your view and his face blanches white. From within the throng of people bustling about the inn, two well-dressed men step into the bar, followed by a gang of similarly dressed people, all wearing a sort of uniform.

"C'mere you little shit!" The larger of the two men says as he spots the terrified merchant, who attempts to escape through the crowd, but is quickly intercepted by the other man. He's fast, you think to yourself, considering you hadn't even seen him slink away to the other side of the room. As the scene unfolds, the music gradually fades out and is replaced by the nervous chatter of onlookers. You can't be certain what's about to happen, but you can tell an unfair fight when you see it. Sucking your teeth, you stand up, hefting a massive sword onto your back and approaching the group.

[Slant] You pace about your suite impatiently, constantly peering through the window into the setting autumn sun. You are at Ludoc's inn meeting a party of warriors you hired to escort you into the Wilds—Goblin domain. It's well past the meetup time, and it is rapidly dawning on you that you've been cheated out of your money—again. Frustrated, you plop down onto one of the plush sofas scattered about the room. There is a war slowly brewing between remnants of the Goblin high royalty and humans, and you have been sent as an envoy of the king to negotiate their surrender—or at least, that's what it says on paper. In reality, you've been disgraced and thrown out of the Royal Academy of Magic, and taking on this mission is your only shot at getting your old life of luxury in Lafira [1.1.000] back. That being said, so far the mission isn't going well, and your funds have nearly been depleted. All you have are the clothes on your back, a small satchel full of supplies, and an oddly shaped parcel that you received from a friend to aid your negotiations. At this rate, however, it doesn't look like you will even get the chance to use whatever's in the package.

You decide to stop moping and head out to your room's balcony for some fresh air. By now, the sun has completely set, and a vibrant moon hangs over the evening sky. You lean against the banister, sighing and turning the parcel over and over in one hand. From below, a large man crashes through a window into the streets below, sending shards of glass shimmering into the night. He hits the ground with a groan as someone else—this time a woman—climbs through the window, menacingly holding a large blade of some kind in one hand. She calmly walks over to the crumpled man and lifts him by his shirt, apparently saying something to him. From behind, someone else emerges from the window, sprinting and crashing into the woman. He bowls her over and the two men restrain her. One of them takes out a cruel-looking knife and holds it to her throat. You realize that if you don't do something, you may very well be watching her die. Without thinking, you jump from your balcony, landing with a soft thud near the men. They turn to you, surprised, and that moment is enough for the woman to break away and scramble to her feet. She sidles up next to you, giving you a grateful nod.

The two men exchange glances as you take positions next to each other. You aren't familiar yet, but the tense situation seems a bit more manageable with the other person by your side. You ready your blade as you produce a small bow and a set of arrows from your bag and replace them with the parcel. It looks like it's going to be a fight!

This is the first of many battles of your adventure, before we can begin, there are systems that we must discuss. To prepare, locate the cards numbered 1.1.001, 1.1.002, 1.1.003, and 1.1.004, which correspond to the character cards for Pusha and Slant, and the ENEMY cards for KEEL and PATCH—your opponents. Your character cards give a bit of information on Pusha and Slant, as well as some basics for you to remember. For example, as you can see Slant excels at support magic, but is only capable with small, light weapons. Pusha, on the other hand, is adept with large weapons and should be focused on dealing and negating damage. Therefore, utilizing their skillsets in a harmonious manner is the key to victory.

Battles are conducted in a turn-based style, meaning one side's entire party acts, then the other. In general, every combatant has a DMOD, which determines how much damage they can do based on a combination of dice rolls and a DEF amount, which is a threshold that, once exceeded, means that combatant is defeated. For normal enemies, that's about it, but for more complex ones, like story-related enemies and bosses, they will have traits, and can be revived with a **saving throw** of 12 or more on a d20 die. Traits are abilities that augment the user in some manner. In enemies, traits are usually battle conditions or states that must be observed, while in the players traits are abilities that add variety and utility to your playstyle. Beyond that, for you players, there is your deck and **action points**, or AP. Your deck is what you will constantly be managing throughout your time and includes informational cards that are not used in battle, and functional cards that are. In general, all functional cards cost some amount of AP, which are a set of points you may use each turn to "pay" for card use. In a nutshell, these are the systems in place in PROJECT HARMONY, and everything that happens in game will revolve around or extend from them.

Now, let's examine the cards we have here again.

On the enemy cards, you will find a short description of that creature or person, their DMOD, DEF amount, and any traits they may have. Familiarize yourself with this information and be sure to make use of the QR CODES for further reference.

In addition to your character cards, there are your LOADOUTS that we must build. Your loadout is a set of cards that determines how your specific character plays. They are part of your deck, but in battle, they sit face up in front of you for reference, they do not have to be drawn. So, for our first battle, please locate these cards:

1. Pusha
 - a. Weapon: Titan Blade
 - b. Trait: Advanced Guard
2. Slant
 - a. Weapon: Wanderer's Bow
 - b. Trait: Soul Charge

As you can see, your loadouts are fairly simple now, but they may become more varied and complex as the game continues.

<<Conducting the battle>>

Now that we have our cards selected, retrieve the two starter decks for Pusha and Slant. Place them somewhere in reach and line up your loadout cards nearby. Then, place the enemy cards somewhere that you two can reach them. As you might have guessed, where exactly you place things is not so important.

Now, I will walk you through the battle and you will be on your way. Before you start, take a moment to read over your enemy's cards. As you see, Patch does a significant amount of damage to one target, and gets a boost if he is revived. Keel, on the other hand, does about average damage, but has a drastically reduced saving throw threshold. So, a reasonable strategy would be to defend Slant from attacks from Patch, and defeat Keel first.

In setting up, determine which side acts first by rolling 2d20s. The first roll represents your side and the second is the enemy's. **Whichever lands a higher number goes first.** If you happen to roll the same numbers, roll again.

When facing a large quantity of enemies, you may find that losing the opening dice roll may spell certain doom before you even get a chance to act. To mitigate that, during the first turn, you may do saving throws before the enemy's turn ends. These function the same way as regular saving throws, **get 12 or above and you will be revived, but the player who did the throw will not be able to do a normal attack that turn.** Certain traits and cards may alter these rules, so it is important to consider that as you build your deck. No matter how powerful your deck is, if you lose before you can use it then it doesn't matter.

Moving on, now that the turn order is established, I will explain how to play your characters and the enemies.

1. On your turn:
 - a. Decide who goes first.
 - i. You can flip a coin, but it might be better to consider your party and the kind of cards you have in your decks. Maybe Slant should usually go first since she can buff Pusha for a devastating first round attack, or maybe your strategy involves opening the fight with an attack or defense buff from Pusha that Slant can follow up on.
 - b. That player acts
 - i. First, draw three cards and place them on the table, this is your hand. It is important NOT to both draw cards once you start. **ONLY DRAW YOUR HAND ONCE IT IS YOUR TURN**
 - ii. Once you have done that, you may:
 1. Perform an attack that targets one of the enemies using your DMOD -or- use an applicable trait -or- use a saving throw
 2. Use skill cards that cost AP, these cards may buff your allies, debuff your enemies, deal raw damage, or provide utility.
 - c. The other player acts
 - i. Although your characters are different, what you can do in a turn is identical.
2. The enemy's turn
 - a. Once you two are finished conducting your turns, you must simulate the enemy's actions like so.
 - i. Going from left to right,
 1. Flip a coin to decide who the enemy is targeting, then roll for the damage done using their DMOD -or- conduct a saving throw on a BOSS enemy (note: only one of these saving throws can be made per enemy turn)
3. Continue going back and forth in this manner until the battle is either won or lost
 - a. If you lose a normal battle, subtract 1d6 gems from each player for the number of enemies you DIDN'T defeat. Then, you may retry the battle. (note: in the case of this tutorial fight, you may retry as many times as you desire.
 - b. If you win the battle, award yourselves 1d8+4 gems per enemy you faced.

Now, go ahead and take on those brutes!

<<Post battle>>

You two defeat the men, knocking them unconscious and tying them to a nearby tree. You look around and realize the patrons of the inn have been watching the whole time. Slant frowns at them, but Pusha just smiles sheepishly, climbing back through the window and gathering her things. You, slant, follow her in and whistle low at the mess that was once the bar. Many of the tables have been overturned and the bar has a noticeably human shaped crater in it.

"Thanks for that," you, Pusha, says as you hoist a large card table back onto its legs.

"Whatever." You, Slant, say, leaning against the bar.

From the other side of the room a small, portly man enters, clapping and smiling.

"One hell of a show, eh?" The man says, approaching you two. He stops at the ruins of another table and taps it with a long white wand. The pieces tremble for a moment before slowly reforming back into a table. He does this to a few more items as he approaches you, whistling to himself. When he finally joins you two near the bar, he grabs your hands and shakes them frantically.

"Nice to meet ya, I'm Ludoc, and this here's my fine establishment!"

You both feel a tinge of guilt as you stand in the ruined bar, but he seems unfazed—pleased, even.

"I know, I know, looks bad, doesn't it?" He continues, hopping onto the counter next to Slant, "But I don't mind. Place is enchanted, fixes itself with a bit of motivation."

You two notice that the bar is slowly repairing itself. Chairs are beginning to slide back into place and the swarms of little shards of glass are zipping through the air to reform various dishes and windows. It seems your battle did quite a number on the Inn, but it'll be back to peak form in no time. Even many of the patrons have reclaimed their seats and begun ordering drinks. You two are about to turn in when you, Pusha, stop dead in your tracks. You realize that the gangly man you were defending is nowhere to be found. Asking around, no one seems to know where he went, which you find odd. What you find even more odd is that your brother's ring, which was with your belongings, seems to be missing. You relay this to Slant, who checks her things. Sure enough, she is missing something, too.

Outside, the two men have woken up and are struggling against the tree. You two and Ludoc approach them and cut the thick rope, freeing them. They eye you with disdain as the three of you stand over them.

*"Oh, knock it off Patch," Ludoc says, reaching out to help the larger man up. "You too, Keel." The men reluctantly accept his aid, stumbling to their feet. **It seems the two troublemakers are a bit of a fixture in these parts.** For the first time, the men speak.*

"Whaddaya think you was doin'?" Patch says to you two, still dusting himself off.

*"You let that **thief** get away!" Keel cuts in.*

*You both are speechless, it seems your hasty actions have gotten you into some trouble. The five of you head back into the bar, where it is nearly entirely fixed. The music has resumed and the patrons are merrily chatting as if nothing had happened. Ludoc calls a server over and orders everyone drinks while you talk. It seems that the person you had been fighting to defend is actually a well known thief nicknamed **The Whistler**. He travels about on horseback, whistling a strange tune that mesmerizes those he encounters. Before they know it, The Whistler robs them of their most valuable possessions and escapes into the dense forests that surround the area. You ask Patch and Keel where you might find this man, but they merely shrug. Apparently, tonight was the closest anyone had come to capturing The Whistler—well, that was before you threw Patch through a window.*

"Whatever he stole," Keel says, "You can consider it as good as gone."

"Hundreds of caves around," Patch adds, "Won't find him, no way, no how."

Realizing that your precious items may be gone for good, you two abruptly stand up, jostling the table and catching glances from some of the other patrons.

"WE HAVE TO FIND HIM" You say in unison.

Ludoc chuckles at this, and says, "Ya might have a shot, ask around, see if anyone knows anything." Taking a long swig of his drink, he continues: "I'll send my boys to back you up, after all, I got a bone to pick with that cretin myself."

*"Pa, No!" The men protest, but it seems that Ludoc's mind is made up. So, **the brothers, Patch and Keel, will be joining your party!** <<Add their respective assist cards to your decks [card no. 1.1.015]>>*

Before you can set off, you need to ask around to see if anyone has any idea where the Whistler might have gone. You don't have to talk to everyone, but you do need **something that'll help you figure out where to go**. The only notable people in the room are.

1. Barkeeper—they are mumbling to themselves about the events that transpired. Life has really changed [Card no. 1.1.9]
2. Drunk patron—who let him in here? The only thing more distracting than his appearance is his stench. I would avoid him...but what do I know? [Card no. 1.1.10]
3. The Giantess—she's midway into a song...but if you're in a hurry, I suppose you could interrupt her... [Card no. 1.1.11]
4. An old soldier—he's lounging way back in the room, smoking a pipe and tapping along to the music. Maybe he might know something. [Card no. 1.1.12]

Once you find the map, move on to the next packet to continue.

Episode 1.1B

Midlands--Kaht Outpost – Ludoc's Inn

You two go over the worn map with Patch and Keel. Looking south you can see that there is a rather large cave system that extends into goblin domain. On one of the entrances, you can see a hastily drawn star. The brothers mention that they have seen that area before, and that it is teeming with very aggressive goblins. So if the Whistler does happen to hideout there, your party seems sure that he must be connected with them somehow. It looks like it will be a fairly short trip, but you all aren't sure how long it might take to apprehend the man, so you'll need supplies. Luckily, Ludoc has offered to help you out in this regard, giving you both 15 gems to spend a piece. (Go ahead and add them to your totals.)

Alrighty, looks like the adventure is getting underway, but before you head out—and before I stop interrupting you so often—lets go over the shop system. Throughout your session you will be able to shop in the various towns and outposts you may find yourself at. There, you can buy new cards for your deck, including cards that use AP, traits, weapons, consumables, and so on. (A quick note on consumables: **In battle, they go in a separate pile from your deck that you can look through at any time. Using them does NOT cost AP, but replaces your attack action. Furthermore, you may only use one consumable per turn unless otherwise noted! In addition, you may use consumables for either yourself or your partner unless otherwise noted.**)

So, let's go ahead and find card no. 1.1.006, which is the "location" card for Kaht Outpost. Typically, you would retrieve that card when you first enter a place, but for our purposes, it was not important until just now. Anyway, on the card you'll see the name and location of this little outpost, as well as a list of items that the shop has. In that list, you will also see the amount of each item that the shop has. Weapons, traits, and skill cards have a set stock (which ensures you don't run out of cards before you run out of shops to visit), but many consumables can be purchased to your heart's content—assuming you have the gems! **If you run out of cards to represent your consumables, just write them in the "inventory" area of your character sheet.**

Those were the basics, so go ahead and purchase what you think you may need from the shop. Just keep in mind that you two are working together, so some time should be spent thinking about how the cards that one of you owns may be used to both of your benefits. Don't worry about buying anything specific, but do buy *something*. Continue once you're satisfied, and remember, if any of the systems are confusing, feel free to read over this or other sections again.

You two gather some supplies and store them in your bags. It's pretty late, so your party decides to turn in for the night. Slant, you return to your suite, stretching out on the massive bed and quickly dozing off. Pusha, you curl up in a corner of the bar, listening to the band as the night winds on.

Early the next day, your party meets up in the lobby. Although you got the most sleep out of everyone, you, Slant, are still yawning and picking at your hair. You, Pusha, despite not having slept much at all, are jogging in place, eager to get moving. Patch joins you, huffing and puffing under the weight of his armor. Keel, on the other hand, is lounging in a nearby chair, enjoying a mug of coffee. Ludoc smiles at the group, sitting down next to his son with a drink of his own.

Quickly, you review the plan. Your group will head into the Wilds towards the southernmost cave system. There, one of the larger openings should be concealing the entrance to the Whistler's lair. If you can, capture him using a set of cuffs provided by Ludoc, and take him northeast, towards Lament, where the authorities there can process him. Your party commits the plan to memory as you all head out on foot to the caves.

Before too long, the forested areas begin to thicken and the air begins to cool. In the distance, you can see medium sized caves that dip into a low mountainside. Looking through a telescope, you can

see that one of them appears to be guarded by a few goblins. They stare into the out into the morning, searching the landscape for any intruders. It looks like you'll have to fight your way into the cave. Moving closer, you can see about three of them, all armed, but not particularly menacing. They chat nonchalantly amongst themselves as they do their jobs. Your party moves as close as you can before engaging them. Then, at once, you all leap from your hiding places and attack the goblins!

<<Encounter: 3 goblins (card no. 1.1.14)>>

Nice! It looks like you've caught the goblins off guard, you'll get the chance to do that other times throughout your adventure, and it grants you a pretty sweet bonus. Since they weren't ready for you, you may act first and you get to skip their first turn. In addition, if you manage to defeat all of the enemies before they get a chance to act, you receive a **stealth bonus of 1d4 gems per defeated monster** and you **automatically start the next battle in the sequence in stealth mode**. Therefore, if you are careful, you can clear entire areas of enemies without them ever being aware of your presence. In this regard, there are a couple of caveats:

1. Some enemies may automatically negate stealth. This includes enemies with extrasensory abilities and enemies that are so aggressive or fast that they always act first.
2. Some battles will be impossible to do stealthily due to narrative reasons.
3. Some battles may be impossible to do unless you are stealthy.

In addition to narrative-prompted stealth, you may roll for stealth before you begin a sequence of fights. Right now, to roll for stealth, you must land a 16 or higher on a d20, but that number may change depending on certain circumstances. If you happen to fail the roll, however, the enemies will be extra alert, and can automatically act first.

Now also happens to be the time where we need to discuss the **assist system**, which allows you to use the abilities of characters that have temporarily joined your party. As you will see, you both have one Keel and one Patch card, each with different abilities. Often, assist card sets will come with a specific card for both Pusha and Slant, but other times you will have to decide who gets to put the card in your deck. In addition, there may be multiple assist cards tied to **particularly important characters**. Anyway, using an assist card does not cost AP, but rather, it takes the place of your attack action. Depending on the card, an assist may do a certain amount of damage, perform buff/debuffs, or enact some other support ability. In some cases, an assist card may have a **passive ability** that you can use just by having it in your hand or a **persistent ability** that you place on your play surface. In that case, enemies will **attack that card instead of the player that played it**, meaning that these powerful cards can be both a shield with a defense threshold, and constant support.

Now then go ahead and run the encounter, and we'll move on.

<<After battle>>

*You defeat the goblins, tossing their bodies into some nearby bushes and entering the cave. It's incredibly dark, lit only by soft blue torches recessed into the walls. The pathway is windy, but luckily there are no splits in the path to confuse you. Your party trots along carefully until you feel the air begin to shift slightly. It seems that you are approaching the **first room of the dungeon**.*

A few words on dungeons: They will be the primary challenge during your sessions, consisting of an onslaught of battles fought one after another culminating in a boss fight at the end. Each dungeon may look different, but they all share some common characteristics. First, there is always a "boss room", which will usually have some number of powerful monsters that you must defeat to continue the story. In addition, there are always a mix of "mandatory" and "optional" rooms. Take a moment to trace the path from the start of the dungeon to the boss room (the one with the skull). Essentially, any room that you must pass through on the way to the boss must be cleared, so in many cases, there will be rooms that are

not necessary to complete or there may be multiple paths to the boss. Usually, if this is the case then there may be reasons to explore beyond what is required. Much of this information will be on that dungeon's card, which will give you a brief overview of the dungeon for your reference.

Encounters in dungeons take place in "rooms", which are the open zones that have little triangles in them. The triangles represent the number of enemies in the room, but you must consult the encounter list included on that dungeon's card for the specific monster composition. Take a look at the rooms of the dungeon and you'll also notice that each one is color coded. That is because the kinds of rooms that can make up a single dungeon may vary, so the colors indicate how you should handle the rooms. The kinds of rooms are as follows:

1. Green: A standard room with a standard amount of monster. Gem loot calculated by 1d6 per defeated monster.
2. Blue: A challenge room usually containing a larger quantity or more difficult enemies. Loot calculated by 2d4 per defeated monster.
3. Purple: A special room usually containing the sorts of monsters and amount that would be found in a challenge room. In addition to calculating gem loot, **players may swap cards from the "world deck"**.
 - a. **A note on the world deck: The world deck contains all cards that may be obtained as loot throughout the game. In a special room, you may draw 10 cards from that deck and choose three to exchange with cards currently in your deck.** In addition to standard cards, the world deck may also contain rare cards only obtainable in this manner.
4. Red: A special room containing that dungeon's boss. In general, these rooms will contain some combination of high level monsters and/or special monsters unique to the narrative. Loot is calculated with 2d8 per defeated monster. In addition, players may take up to three cards from the world deck a piece.

Well, for now, that's as much as you need to know, so go ahead and take on the dungeon. If you need to, feel free to restart the dungeon at any point, but you must discard any loot obtained!

Return to this book when you have reached to boss room.

Episode 1.1C

Wilds – Outer Rim—Whistler's Caves

As your party approach what seems to be the final room of the dungeon, you crouch low, straining to hear past the massive double door in your path. You can hear a strange whistling coming from inside the room. Just as you all prepare to enter; the whistling abruptly stops. Sensing that your chance may be slipping away, your party barges into the room! Despite that you heard, however, the room seems to be completely empty save for a pile of gems and various treasure in the center of the room. The gems draw you all to them, their glow mysterious and strange. They are a charcoal black and the insides of the stones seem to warp and shimmer in the light. Curious, Patch reaches out to touch one before you, Pusha, suddenly grab his hand.

"No!" You say, "I've seen these before, and I wouldn't touch them."

At your intervention, the group suddenly perks up, as if you were all under some sort of a spell. The room suddenly begins to feel like its closing in on you as you fan out, searching the dimly lit room for any danger. The cave walls are mostly bare, with little sign of inhabitants save for the loot and some gear here and there. Whomever was here must have just escaped, but to where? You all don't see anything that looks like a way out.

In fact, you can't even find the door you used to come in!

Suddenly, you become painfully aware of movement all around you. Your party backs up towards the center of the room, weapons ready. From the darkness several foul creatures emerge. They are long, insect-like and slimy [Card no. 1.1.008]. They begin circling your group at an uncomfortably quick pace, closing in fast. It's an ambush!

<<Continue onto the next section once you have completed the battle.>>

Episode 1.2A

Wilds—Outer Rim—Whistler's Caves

The sun is sinking low into the sky when your party emerges from the caves, battered and bruised. You find a nearby clearing and make camp. The stench of failure hangs over the group, as you solemnly prepare food and bathe in a nearby river. Despite combing the entire area, the Whistler is nowhere to be found, and with no clues left to go on, it seems like your journey is over.

You consider taking shifts to keep guard, but you're all so tired that if anyone did attack, a moment's notice wouldn't do you much good. So, your party heads to bed, letting the fire burn out into the night.

Your party awakens late the next day. The sun is already high in the sky and beaming down on you. Once everyone is on their feet, you all go about rekindling the fire and preparing breakfast before moving on. The journey back to the inn will be short one, but you all are loathe to return, having failed in your mission.

Just as your group is gearing up and preparing to set off, you hear someone stumbling through the woods heading right towards your group. You all ready your weapons, hoping that it isn't another fight.

"Help, please" The person calls out, "Goblins, to the northeast!"

A man in tattered clothes dashes into the clearing, falling over at your feet. He is heavily wounded and breathing hard. You, Pusha, and Patch help him onto his back. You, Slant, begin to mend some of his wounds, the soothing magic calming him enough to speak again. He begs for help, telling your party that a small army of goblinkind suddenly attacked Lament early this morning. They began slaughtering people for apparently no reason before taking control of the mayor's mansion. He mentions hearing a strange whistling at around dawn before goblins began to emerge from the surrounding forests. The village was completely unprepared and was overrun in without much of a fight.

Hearing this, your party jumps up, eager for another chance to complete your mission. Patch picks the man up, cradling him as you set off. You, Slant, stay near, healing the man as much as you can. The journey to Lament [Card no. 1.2.001] is a several hours, even at the quick pace you are traveling, so it is well into the night when you start to see Lament in the distance. The man, who has since been healed enough to walk on his own, rushes ahead of the group, calling out to any townspeople that might be around.

Even from the distance you are at, you can tell that the town is still going to be dangerous. It appears to be decimated, with most of the simple homes destroyed and many still burning. The man, still running and calling out, suddenly stops as he gets a clearer view of the town. Catching up to him, you see that he is staring, wide eyed and tearful, at the town. Up close, it is even more devastated than it originally appeared. There are bodies lying about here and there, some still struggling to crawl away from the wrecked town. People's homes are on fire, with their livestock having been burned to death still in their pens. In the center of the main road, several houses have collapsed into a mass of burning material that it seems like the goblins have been using as a bonfire. From this distance, you are safe, but if you want to save the village, it looks like you'll have to brave the burning town. [Dungeon no 1.2]

Episode 1.2B

Midlands—Lament—Mayor's Mansion

Your party barges into the mansion, weapons ready. The house has been completely ransacked with furniture and valuables strewn across the ground. At the top of a massive pair of stairs leading to the second level of the mansion, the mayor lays tied up and struggling. You all rush to his aid, struggling to free the giant from his binds.

"Let me get that for you." Someone call outs from within the mansion, and before you are prepared to respond, a giant axe comes flying across the room right towards your group! You all just barely dodge it, but the mayor is not so lucky. The massive blade buries itself deep in the man's torso and he passes out. From the foot of the stairs, a massive goblin emerges, smirking grimly as he watches the horror spread across your faces. From between unnaturally sharp teeth, he growls, "Oops, my bad."

The giant goblin walks casually up the stairs to your group, nonchalantly ripping the axe from the mayor's body. You are frozen in place, as if some sort of spell has overtaken your minds. This is when you began to hear it, a low, strange whistling coming from beyond one of the second-floor doors. You desperately search the room for the source of the sound, painfully aware of the hulking goblin standing above you.

At last, the Whistler steps out from one of the rooms, still whistling his strange song. His merchant disguise is gone, revealing a twisted and sinister form.

"Wraiths are ghastly creatures, aren't they?" The Whistler says, breaking the spell and releasing you. You all consider making your move now, but the massive goblin anticipates this, tightening the grip on his blade and threatening a deadly swing.

"Oh relax, Mazura. They're hardly be going anywhere."

Mazura grunts and relaxes his posture. "Suit yourself, I like a struggle anyways."

The two stand over your party for what feels like millennia. You're all actively looking for any way to turn the tables on your assailants, but the threat of Mazura's sharp blade and the Whistler's mysterious magic keeps you from making any definite moves.

Suddenly, Mazura's grip tightens on his weapon again. His eyes bulge, and he falls to his knees, clutching his throat. With a hearty cough, he spews a dark fluid onto the floor. Your party is unsure of what exactly is the matter with him, but it is clear that your chance to act may be fast approaching. Mazura is now nearly curled in on himself, hacking and leaking the strange fluids from his eyes, ears, and nose. A look of concern briefly flashes over the Whistler's face before he hops to his feet and comes to Mazura's aid, whistling a blisteringly fast tune that seems to alleviate some of the pain. Mazura climbs to his feet, calm, but clearly unsteady.

At this moment, your party exchanges glances. The time to act is now! With a deft motion, Keel juts his foot out, sweeping Mazura off of his feet as you, Pusha, dive from the ground, tackling the massive Goblin. You, slant, spring to your feet and ready an arrow aimed right between the Whistler's eyes. Patch backs you up, crouched low and ready initiate a swift attack. You back the whistler into a corner of the large room, but Mazura cannot be so easily quelled. With a hearty grunt, he breaks out of your grip sending you, Pusha, and Keel sprawling across the floor.

Mazura seems to have regained his composure and is absolutely bristling with anger and aggression. Despite the small advantage you had, it seems both sides have been returned to equal footing. With nowhere to run, and success within your reach, it's time to fight!

<<Retrieve cards no. 1.2.001 and 1.2.002 for this encounter>>

Before you take on this duo, there's a new mechanic to discuss. Some enemies, particularly bosses or heavily armored enemies, will have a SHEILD stat, which effectively protects them from a certain threshold of damage. Like regular DEF stats, to break someone's shielding, you must roll a value higher than it. One major difference, however, is that once the SHEILD stat is broken once, you never need to break it again unless otherwise stated (even if they are revived). Think of it like this, if you break someone's buckler, they can heal as much as they want, but the buckler won't be fixed. So, in battle, you must first break the SHEILD threshold before you can take a crack at the DEF threshold.

Here, you'll see that MAzura has a pretty decent shield stat (likely because of his thick skin and muscles), but the Whistler has no shield at all. Because of this, however, the Whistler has a bit higher of a DEF stat, so be careful of that. Anyways, good luck and be sure to move on once you've won!

Episode 1.2C

Midlands—Lament—Mayor's Mansion

Using everything you have, your party bests the duo, but before you can land the finishing blows, Grem begins abruptly begins to have another coughing fit. This time, he is coughing up significantly more of the black liquid and wheezing between breaths. The color drains from his skin and the Whistler looks horrified as the giant goblin drops his axe and falls to the floor, clawing at his skin. You all hesitate. The goblin looks absolutely pitiful writhing about on the floor and for a moment, you (Slant) consider attempting to heal him.

"This soon?" Mazura chokes out, looking desperately at the Whistler, who is beginning to slowly back away from the scene. "I need more, this pain!"

"There is no more," He says, before muttering something to himself.

Your party is obviously unsettled by what you are witnessing, but the mission comes first. You raise your weapons at the two men, ready to finish them off and bring the encounter to a close, but then something happens that catches you completely off guard. The Whistler, desperate to avoid capture kicks his partner over before diving out of a nearby window. The gangly man hits the ground with a surprised yelp, but rolls into a run and makes his escape westward. In the distance, you hear a wagon roll away from town.

You all were so unprepared for what just happened that it takes a moment for anyone to speak. It is Mazura's pained groans that snap you all back to reality. Your target has just escaped and his accomplice appears to be dying right before your eyes!

Quickly, you (Slant) rush to his side, casting any spell you can think of to keep him alive. Nothing seems to completely alleviate the pain like the Whistler's song, but you manage to quell his hacking cough. You (Pusha) and Patch hoist the goblin onto your shoulders and carry him into one of the mansion's bedrooms, all the while Keel begins mending some of his wounds. The stress causes him to pass out, and you tie him to the bed. After a short time, Mazura begins to stabilize and a bit of the color returns to his skin.

Conscious again, the goblin attempts to sit up, groggily pulling at his restraints, but stops once he sees that he is surrounded. For a second, his eyes search the room, taking in the situation.

"So, this is it, huh." Mazura says, lying back on the bed. "Appreciate the comfort, but you might as well go ahead and finish me off."

"Don't think I haven't thought about it." You (Pusha) say, leaning over the large goblin. "You destroyed an entire village. Those were good people out there."

"Don't matter. War's coming, land is valuable."

His calm and collected manner seems to be completely at odds with his earlier actions, and it is infuriating to you all.

"Let's just gank 'em now." Patch says, cracking his knuckles. "Spoutin' that war nonsense aint nothin but an excuse."

"Agreed, besides, we gotta get a move on if we wanna chase down that thief." Keel adds.

"Hold on a second." You (Slant) say, stepping forward and producing a thin parcel from your cloak. "If this guy is who I think it is, then he may be useful." You unwrap the parcel, producing an ornate badge with the royal seal on it.

"By order of Queen Rappala, identify yourself, lord."

The word **lord** hangs in the air, and for a moment, it catches Mazura off guard. You (Slant) reveal that you are working under orders of the Queen—leaving out the disgraceful circumstances, of course—and explain that you had known of a Goblin Lord rumored to be in the area, but since the names of the Goblin Lordship is a heavily guarded secret, had to be sure before you made your move.

“Going by your physique and weapon choice,” You continue, “may I safely assume that I am speaking with Goblin Lord Mazura?”

The mention of the fabled axe master draws gasps from the rest of your party, and the look on the goblin warrior’s face confirms it. Mazura grunts in confirmation.

“So, now you’ll tell me why the queen is ignoring the peace treaty and sending her minions out to the midlands, yes?” You (Slant) say, realizing that this encounter may be your ticket to redemption. Mazura’s response dashes those hopes, however.

“Queen’s dead.” He growls through gritted teeth. “Gutted like a pig on the battlefield.”

Now it’s your turn to gasp. With the goblin queen apparently long dead, it seems you may never accomplish your mission. Even then, your bargaining chip is gone anyway, so perhaps it was hopeless anyway, you think to yourself.

Time passes as your party questions the dying Goblin. Including the info about the queen’s death in the war, [Card no 1.2.004] you learn of an increasingly tense power struggle amongst the goblin lordship. The Wilds has been split into opposing factions, with goblin kind turning on each other as each lord vies for control of the crumbling ecosystem. The Heart of the Wilds [Card no 1.2.005] are particularly treacherous, controlled by the strongest of the goblin lords.

In exchange for his life, Mazura [Card no 1.2.002] has given you this information. In addition to that, you take a map [Card no 1.2.006] and his axe, the WINDBREAKER [Card no 1.2.XXXX].

Patch and Keel decide to stay in Lament to guard Mazura and aid reconstruction of the devastated village. <<Remove the Patch and Keel assist cards from your decks>> In the meantime, you two attempt to follow after the Whistler.

Following tracks left by the whistler in his hasty escape, you two are led to the outskirts of Manta, a fairly large settlement to the west of Lament. [Card No. 1.2.007] There, you find an abandoned cart with the horse still tethered to it. You (Pusha) release the horse as you (slant) search the cart. It appears that the Whistler’s escape was even more desperate than it initially appeared, because he left behind almost everything he had on him, including the satchel [Card no 1.2.008] and merchant’s disguise [Card no 1.2.009]. Inside, you find your missing items, the strange parcel and Afi’s ring. In addition, you find an ornate dagger [Card no. 1.2.010], a bundle of keys [Card no 1.2.011], and a long shawl [Card no. 1.2.012].

It seems you have recovered your lost items, yet your adventure is far from over. The mystery of the Whistler’s disappearance and true motives still hangs over your heads, and your individual goals have yet to be met. Where is Afi? Does anyone know? When will the increasing tensions between goblins and humans erupt again? How will you reclaim your prestige if the queen of all goblins is dead?

You two decide to stick together as you dive deeper into the rabbit hole.

Episode 1.3A

Midlands—Manta

The town of Manta [Card no 1.3.000] is a bustling hub of business and culture. Here, races both magical and not mix freely, and the differences that divide them seem to disappear. You two have been staying at an inn for the last few days, recovering from your journey. Your plan is to leave town tomorrow and head towards a place known as the Arcane Falls [Card no 1.3.001], which is a sacred goblin training ground a little ways into The Wilds. Using the Queen's seal, you (Slant), have procured a wagon for your journey, and you (Pusha) managed to find the Whistler's horse and coax it into coming with you. In a few days, you will meet up with a friend of yours (Slant), Shura, the master thief [1.3.002]. She is a close friend and aid in your quest to contact the goblin royalty, and she should be waiting there to escort you into the Heart of the Wilds [Card no 1.2.005].

Until then, you have some time to kill. There are a few shops in town and establishments that are home to all manner of interesting people. You decide to do a bit of exploration before turning in for the night and continuing your journey.

<<Continue when you are ready.>>

You leave Manta early the next day, moving steadily south on a long winding road known as the Snake Pass [Card no 1.3.005]. You are about a few days journey back to the Wilds, and a couple of days until the nearest outpost town, Xuric [Card no. 1.3.006]. The Well populated zones near Manta eventually give way to rolling fields of grain and livestock as you near the outpost. The trip is mostly uneventful, and you begin to see the silhouette of Xuric in the distance as the sun sets on the second day of your journey.

You pull up to the gates of Xuric as the moon hangs high in the sky. What you see utterly baffles and frightens you. The town is more or less a shell of empty buildings and decimated homes. It appears that this town had been ransacked as well, but it was not as fortunate as Lament. There seems to be little left of Xuric inhabitants, but make no mistake, the stench of death still hangs in the air.

You decide to look around, moving cautiously through the outpost town, checking for any survivors or valuables. In general, anything of value is long gone, but you do find an odd chest [1.3.007] sunken in the mud behind one of the houses. It's clear that someone tried to pick the lock for some time, but it remains dutifully shut. You heft the chest onto your cart, thinking that perhaps one of you might find a way to open it eventually. Until then, your party pushes on, eager to be as far away from the destroyed outpost as possible. By morning, you all are exhausted, and pull over to the side of the road to rest. You can see the thick forests of the Wilds in the distance, but you're still a ways away from the falls. You build a fire and take turns keeping guard as the other person naps.

By about noon, you two are ready to move on, but suddenly your horse's ears perk up and it begins to shuffle around uncomfortably.

"What's wrong with it?" You (Slant) say with some annoyance.

"Mm, not sure. Probably hears something." You (Pusha) say before turning to the beast and beginning to stroke its mane. "Relax, girl, what's wrong?"

You don't have to wonder long, as a carriage full of goblins comes zooming along the road towards you from the north. You quickly lead the horse and cart into some tall brush and duck low behind it. Before long, the carriage comes whizzing by, a squad of menacing goblins whooping and chattering amongst each other. You wait until you can hear that the goblins are long gone before returning to the trail.

"Think they're going where we're going?" You (Slant) say.

"I hope not."

You continue on your way, soon entering the dense forests of the Wilds. Unlike the area near Kaht, this part of the wilds is mostly flat, heavily wooded areas that enclose the shrinking snake path. According to the partial map you have, this area should be relatively safe since the Lords tend to keep away from major roads where the Queen's power still holds sway. Heading towards the falls, you pass a couple of small settlements, but stares from the inhabitants make you think twice about entering. Instead, you push onward, and the forests give way to warmer, more humid pockets with several large bodies of water breaking up the tree line. You estimate that you are no more than a few hours from the Arcane Falls and begin looking for a place to stash your horse and cart.

Episode 1.2B

Wilds—Arcane Falls

You arrive at the Arcane Falls in the early evening. Slinking through the dense foliage, you approach the ornate entrance: a massive gate covered in ancient goblin script. Through it, you can see that the ground abruptly drops away to form several waterfalls that all pour into a large lake. Above the lake, a massive platform juts from behind one of the falls, precariously held above the water by thin strips of stone. You head through the gate, continuing to take in the breathtaking sight. The falls are crisscrossed with thin, roped bridges that connect to stone walkways that extend behind the rapidly falling water. Upon closer inspection, you can see small doorways cut into the rock above the walkways—likely living spaces—lit by dimly burning purple light.

From your vantage point, you two also see a band of goblins—likely the ones from earlier—standing on the middle platform in a semicircle around another, larger, unfamiliar goblin. It seems that this goblin is their leader, but you can't make out any of the conversation from where you are.

"I'm going to try to get a closer look," you (Slant) say, deftly running along a thin wire that leads under the platform. From this position, you can make out the conversation.

"Squad 3 reporting in."

"Not followed?"

"No, not followed."

"Good. Fan out, join the other squads and comb the rooms."

"Any specific target?"

"Mmm, maybe. A spy says that she should have the missing artifacts. Some swords, shields, and a gun."

"A gun?"

"I didn't stutter."

"Of course, sir. And is she still in the area?"

"Don't know. We'll find her. Kill her."

"Of course."

You listen in horror as the squad breaks formation and joins a larger rank of goblins already on the rim of the falls. You realize that they are looking for Shura and—assumedly—some cache of weapons that she has. Peeking out from under the platform, you signal your partner to go on without you.

You (Pusha) couldn't hear the conversation, but from the way the squad of goblins began to move about, you can tell that they are looking for something. Getting a signal from Slant, you push ahead, slowly crossing the bridge towards the first row of rooms.

It looks like you'll have to defeat the invading goblins before you can meet up with Shura, but you have to be quick. Defeat them before they find whatever they are looking for!

Looks like things are getting serious. An unknown band of goblins is occupying the falls and Shura is nowhere to be found! What's worse, you're starting this dungeon separated from each other. You'll have to comb your way through the rooms, taking out the goblins to reclaim the territory, but

you'll have to do it fast. **Both of you must reach the boss in 15 minutes to continue, and you both may begin the dungeon in stealth.** If you fail, you'll have to start all over again.

Episode 1.3C

Wilds—Arcane Falls

You clear out the squads of goblins, meeting up at the center platform. It seems Shura is nowhere to be found, and you (Slant) hope that she escaped before the goblins got there. It's oddly quiet on the platform, with only the rush of water and subtle clink of chimes breaking up the silence. You were prepared to take on the leader of the goblins, but you don't see him anywhere.

Just as you were beginning to think he had somehow escaped, a shadowy figure appears above you two, crashing down towards you with a deadly sword strike. You both barely dodge, splitting up to either side of the rectangular platform. The goblin is clad in a deep red cape and armor, sporting a long and dreadfully sharp rapier. Without speaking a word, he charges at you (Slant), sending you reeling backwards before you can even react, and turns to you (Pusha). He can't topple you as easily, but your might seems worthless next to his precise sword strikes. He parries every attack you throw at him, whittling down at your defense and knocking your weapon from your hand.

You (Slant) rush across the platform, sending a bolt of magic the goblin's way and forcing him to dodge. With the little bit of distance that bought you, you stand in front of your partner, ready for the goblin warrior's next attack. It comes in an instant, a deceptively quick stab that you manage to intercept—but not entirely, as it grazes your side, sending a stream of fresh blood streaming down your abdomen.

By this time, you (Pusha) have recovered, gripping your weapon and preparing a counter attack. The two of you wordlessly coordinate your actions, you (Slant) hopping back to fire arrows at the goblin while you (Pusha) initiate with a wide swing. The sudden attack catches the goblin off guard and he barely dodges your first attacks. You two are already following up with a second initiation that does manage to deal a solid blow to the goblin's chest, denting his armor and sending him reeling backwards. Using your different combat styles, you manage to turn the tides on the goblin. Breathing heavily and obviously deterred, the goblin suddenly leaps far out of your (Pusha) range, using his sword to block arrows as he retrieves a vial from a bag at his waist. Inside is a strange dark powder that appears to glow similarly to the gems you found in the Whistler's caves. Your hearts sink as you realize what the goblin is about to do.

He quickly opens the vial, pouring the powder into his hand and—before you can move to stop him—snorts the entirety of the substance in one go. You stand there, staring at the goblin as he raises his eyes back to you two, which are now becoming increasingly red as the pupils dilate and shrink. The goblin's calm and collected attitude is gone as he squats into a menacing stance, ready to pounce.

In a blink, he attacks you both, sword swinging wildly with such speed that counterattacking feels impossible. His assault pushes you two towards the edge of the platform and the treacherous waters below. With certain doom behind you, you both try to formulate some response but it is to no avail. After taking the black gem powder, the goblin is just too strong for you, even working in tandem. Finally, when the platform has run out and nothing but a single step separates you and certain doom, the goblin raises his sword one final time, prepared to mortally wound you both in one swing and send you careening into the water.

Before he can strike, however, there is a flash as someone blindsides the goblin, shoving him to the ground and giving you the space to recover. Surprisingly, your savior is another goblin! Clad in light armor and gripping a strange looking sword, this goblin battles your assailant, not quite besting him but forcing him to back off a bit more.

You two collect yourselves and ready your weapons. It's now or never, join the mysterious swordsman and defeat that goblin once and for all.

<<Add the assist cards 1.3.008 and 1.3.009 to your respective decks for this battle.>>

Episode 1.3D

Wilds—Arcane Falls

With the help of your new ally, you defeat the enraged goblin, finally returning peace to the Arcane Falls.

"A lord has fallen," The swordsman says with more than a bit for sadness in his voice. "May his soul rest in permanence."

The goblin turns to you two, sheathing his sword and extending a hand. "I am Raz," he says, "and I appreciate your assistance in reclaiming one of my own."

"Wait—" You (Slant) say incredulously, "THE Raz? The war hero?"

"That is what I am called."

"And 'one of your own'? Was he a goblin lord?"

"Indeed, a lord and brother to me. His name was Faisir."

You two look at the crumpled body with a tinge of regret. It seems you have had a hand in the demise of at least half of the goblin royalty.

You speak with Raz [1.3.007], and he explains that Faisir was under the influence of Black Gem Powder, a deadly substance that enhances one's natural abilities, but at a great cost. Consuming a little can be the difference between winning or losing a battle, but the amount he had been abusing made him a near unshakeable force. The withdrawal, however, strips the user of their magical ability and saps their strength, killing them slowly if they can't keep a steady supply. You realize that this must have been happening to Mazura, as well. Raz confirms that the goblin lordship had easy access to the powder, despite it being illegally obtained.

As the moon hangs high in the sky, you make a fire and continue your conversation with Raz. Apparently, the use of Black Gem Powder to increase the strength of goblin forces resulted in the event known as The Black Wave [1.3.009], which damaged the goblin's method of channeling their magic, which had already been reduced following the destruction of the goblin spires [1.3.008]. The event also happened to coincide with the disappearance of Pusha's brother, you two learn that night. Eager for more answers, you question Raz further, finding out that the ensuing war had been accelerated by that event and the goblin people's waning magical ability. Goblins had been being oppressed by humans from the citadel and surrounding areas, and at the behest of Queen Rappala, sought to conscript the goblins to servitude. Raz's efforts kept much of that from happening, but the struggle ended in the goblin's decisive defeat and the total destruction of humans to the southeast of the wilds—the Farseers—who had allied with the goblins in their struggle.

"The humans who aided us fought well," Raz says, looking out into the night, "but in the end, one of our own betrayed us. It was all Shura and I could—"

"Shura? You know her?" You (Slant) cut in, eager for news about your friend.

"Indeed I do. She was my wife."

"Where is she now. I've come to meet her, but..."

For a moment, Raz's expression darkens, then he looks up at you two. "She's dead. Cut down in the Citadel."

.....

The next morning, your party visits a small grave overlooking the falls. It is small, about the size of a goblin, and marked with a long knife planted in a rock. Raz is silent as you pay your respects to your fallen friend.

Feeling that your paths may be inescapably crossed, Raz decides to join you in journeying into the Heart of the Wilds. Before then, you decide to stay at the Arcane falls, training with Raz for the battles ahead. For you (Pusha), Raz and the Black Gems may be the key to solving your brother's disappearance. For you (Slant) it feels only right to join forces with your friend's husband, and maybe through him you will be able to cope with your loss.

Convinced that you (Slant) won't need the parcel anymore, you eventually open it, revealing an extremely rare item--a gun! Weapons like this are known to be of Knomeworxx [1.3.009] origin, and VERY illegal. You gawk at it's strange shape. It's not like any projectile weapon you have ever seen (not that you've ever actually seen a gun in person, anyway). It's fairly large, but clearly meant for one-handed or standard crossbow grip, strangely flat, and smooth, like decorative stone. The gun doesn't appear to take ammo, but pulling the trigger causes the distinct feeling of your own magic energy beginning to leave your body, much like when you cast a spell. You aim into the distance, being sure to be far away from your companions, and squeeze the trigger. With a jolt, the gun shoots a beam of green energy, snapping your arm back with the recoil and forcing you to drop the device. You consider getting rid of the gun, but you realize that with the journey that lies ahead of you, this weapon may be your ace in the hole.

EPISODE 2: THE QUEEN AND HER COURT

Episode 2.1

Wilds--Arcane Falls (Winter)

A cold winter wind blows as your party confidently strides out onto the frozen lake below the training platform. You have been training with Raz for three months, and now it is time to show what all that effort was for. Reaching the center of the lake, you all take stance, Raz on one side, and you two on the other. You squat into a grappler's stance, hands twitching, ready for a devastating takedown. You step a bit back and draw your pistol, narrowing your eyes and locking onto the image of Raz standing coolly on the other side of the lake. Raz draws his blade, channeling his energy before striking his stance. Next to him, the air shimmers and two clones appear.

Over the many sessions you all have had, you two have never beaten Raz, not even once, but this time will be the one. It has to be, war is coming and you must be ready.

"Come." Raz says, and the fight begins.

<<This fight is the first of episode two, and it'll be quite the challenge. Raz is an incredibly talented swordsman with the ability to create copies of himself. You'll have to use everything you know to win this fight. Luckily, in the last three months, you two have been hard at work training and developing new skills. So, before you can begin the fight, we'll run over some changes to your characters and new mechanics.>>

First off, for this fight, remove the Raz assist cards from your deck, but afterwards you may add them back as well as EP2 assist cards [1.2.XXXX] and [1.2.XXXX]. Next, on your character sheets, add +4 to Pusha's DEF and +3 to Slant's DEF. Then, add the "Grappler's Gloves" [2.1.000] to Pusha's inventory and the "Aether Pistol" [2.1.001] to Slant's inventory. Equip them for this fight.

In addition, each character now has new mechanics to use in fights, both of which come with new classes of cards. For Pusha, there is the grapple mechanic, which allows her to "grapple" an enemy of her choice instead of attacking. While grappled, enemies cannot perform actions, but all other enemies in that party will **automatically target** Pusha. In this state, Pusha will be able to access powerful grapple cards that can deal large amounts of damage. The grapple persists for 2d4 turns, and during this time, Pusha may not use her basic attack, only AP skills. This state can be ended at any time. For slant, there is Aether mode, which allows her to skillfully channel her magical energy and gives her access to a new class of spell cards--called Aether Skills--at the expense of her basic attack and 1d4 of her defense. This state can be held indefinitely and canceled at any time.

Add the designated booster packs [B2.1PA & B2.1SL] to your decks and prepare to challenge Raz! <<Draw enemy cards [2.1.XXXX] and 2x [2.1.XXXX] for this battle. Raz and his clones are treated like bosses, so they may be revived.]

Episode 2.2

Wilds--Arcane Falls (Winter)

Using everything you have, you best Raz in combat, bringing the goblin to his knees.

"Very well done," He says, panting. "I think we're ready."

You help him up and you all return to the shore of the lake, where your coats and a fire are waiting. Everyone bundles up and you climb back up the falls, following the zigzagging stairs that populate to lower walls. Deep into the falls there are barracks carved directly out of the stone. You all clean up and settle into a sauna set a ways underground. The hot steam relaxes your tense muscles and wipes away the biting cold. You both think about the time you've spent training with Raz as you recover from today's bout of training.

In the beginning, things were rough, there was little food and you all spent each day training, only stopping for short meals. Raz pushed you to your limits both physically mentally, demanding that you master every technique he presented to you before introducing the next. He trained you in the art of the Boarsman [2.2.XXXX], a devastating martial art involving complex grapples and holds. Despite your pistol being quite foreign, Raz trained you in the art of the Roguelords [2.2.XXXX], focusing on marksmanship and fluid swordplay. Through this training, Raz demonstrated why he is considered a legend. His combat prowess and knowledge is unmatched. Even after months, you both feel that there is yet more to learn from the goblin. Alas, there is little time.

The sound of Raz clearing his throat snaps you to out of your musings.

"Pusha, Slant," He says, "I thank you for joining me for these past months." You nod in affirmation.

"The task ahead is great. The factions have become increasingly restless, and I fear that this winter will see war before its end." Raz's eyes narrow. "It is my belief that war may be inevitable, but that my wife's work may be the undoing of those that hope to benefit the most from the chaos."

"Who could possibly benefit from all of this senseless violence?" You ask.

"The lords," He replies, "And your queen."

Raz explains that the power vacuum created by the Queen's absence has emboldened the Goblin lords to seek the support of their people in order to again lead a rebellion. Unfair peace treaties and slave-like conscription of the goblin people left them eager to fight again. Unlike the great war, however, they wouldn't be fighting for liberation, but control of the two roads that connect the major cities of the land. In the east to south, there is the Snake Pass, and in the west to north, there is the mountain Pass. Together, they form a ring around the citadel and adjacent areas, and would give whomever has control of it free reign over the territories therein. Although the goblin people hold no power outside the wilds, their numbers are great, with strong communities of goblin people all across the land.

The lords care very little about protecting their people, and will send as many as necessary for fodder if it will advance their goals. They will even destroy their bodies using Black Gem powder if it ensures victory. The queen, knowing this, sent envoys to consult with the Goblin queen, who they still believe is hiding out somewhere in the wilds. Most of those envoys, besides you are dead. Furthermore, Raz explains, the queen assumes that the Goblin people are still unified, and that the great-war era agreements still hold sway. She is wrong. With the queen gone, very little to lose, and very much to gain, the lords would stake anything on being the ones to cause an upset.

Another war would result in massive casualties on both sides, and topple the economy, effectively making the royal power moot. If people don't feel like they can trust Rappala in wartime, then perhaps from the ashes of war a new ruling class will emerge, goblins.

*You listen to Raz's explanation intently, but something doesn't quite add up. If the lords seek to return Goblins to power, why would Raz betray them? As if he was anticipating the question, Raz explains that he doesn't believe in the lord's ability to rule the goblin people, and that their campaign would likely end in the extinction of their race. Beyond that, power was never what the goblin queen fought for in the Great War. She wanted the goblin people to live alongside humans, and perhaps she would have achieved her goal, if not for **the defector** [2.2.003], who betrayed his people and cost them the war.*

All in all, it seems that the conflict you have gotten involved in is much deeper than you could have imagined. Still, it is far too late to back down.

Episode 2.3

Wilds-Snake's Tail

Your party leaves the arcane falls the next day. You are journeying deeper towards the heart of the wilds, to a city called Tadorin. Raz has an acquaintance there that is working to dismantle the lord's power struggle, and you've agreed to assist. You take the Snake's Tail [2.3.000], a more inconspicuous offshoot of the Snake's Pass that quietly melds into the interwoven roads connecting various cities in the wilds. Typically, the journey is short, but the cruel winter makes even the most mundane travel treacherous. As such, you lose your horse during the journey. The creature, which had been the only reliable source of transportation during your time at the falls, gave everything it had to get you to Tadorin, then collapsed right at its gates. At Raz's suggestion, you two decide to get a couple of horses before you depart.

Until then, you head into Tadorin [2.3.001], which is a surprisingly large city hidden in a forest of massive trees. Even in the winter they hold firm against cracking winds and heavy snow, so much so that you swear that people are even living in them! Tadorin is truly a sight to be seen. Unlike most of the other towns and cities you two have seen, the population is uniformly goblin. The only humans in sight are—well, you. This realization suddenly makes you feel like you may be completely out of place, but Raz chuckles at your discomfort, assuring you that Tadorin gets human visitors all the time. The word, visitors, is important. Along with a few other places, Tadorin is one of the towns that Raz's efforts secured full goblin control over. You can see that in the people, the structures, and even the attitudes of the inhabitants. Free from human influence, the goblins live in intricately designed homes that consist of an artisanal blending of modern and natural materials. The streets are lively, with goblins talking freely in their blisteringly fast native tongue. You (Slant), who have studied the goblin language extensively, can't even begin to keep up.

"Is this what it was like?" You (Slant) ask, "You know, before..."

"It was," Raz replies with a hint of sadness, "When our ancestors ruled the lands, places like Tadorin were not uncommon."

"We can change that," You (Pusha) cut in, "Where I'm from, humans do live peacefully with other races."

You two take in the sights as Raz leads you two a small home towards the center of the city. When you get to the door, Raz unlocks it and you all walk in. Apparently, Tadorin is Raz's birthplace and this is his childhood home. A thick layer of dust covering the floors and counters informs you that he doesn't visit here often, but it is quite homey. Gesturing to a pair of doors down a long hallway, Raz shows you to your rooms.

After a while, there comes a sharp knock at the door in a very distinct pattern (1...2, 3..., 4, 5, 6). Raz calls for you from the front of the house, but instead of opening the door to let someone in, you all leave the house and head to a bar on in the town square. The bar, called Merak's Place [2.3.002] is a remarkably clean establishment sporting luxuries that surpass anything Ludoc could cook up. The patrons there drink and chat cheerfully, not even batting an eye as you enter. A roaring fire in several places of the establishment cuts away the winter chill—to your delight—and you settle into a comfy booth in one corner of the place. Before too long, a goblin approaches your table, grinning widely and slapping Raz on the back. As the two chat eagerly, you two take a moment to examine the newcomer. He's a head or so taller than Raz, and where Raz is well muscled and toned, he is thin, athletic, with a loose posture. He strikes you two as the roguish type, and his garb—light armor with an intricate cape and cowl—confirms it. What's the most striking about this goblin, however, is his skin tone. Where most goblins are shades of earthy greens, perhaps even turquoise or a shade of greenish-grey, his skin is an unsettling

white, only broken up by the definition in his muscles and face, which is a light grey. You're taken aback by this goblin's unique appearance, but it doesn't seem to catch anyone else's eye.

Once Raz and his friend finish talking, they turn to you two. The strangely colored goblin holds out an hand and you both shake it.

"This is Merak," Raz says, "an old friend and comrade." Merak bows and wave's a hand to the bar around him.

"And this is my place," He says with a smirk.

You all discuss current events with Merak, filling him in on recent happenings: the recent defeat of two of the lords, the increasing pressure from the queens forces, etc. Merak informs you that the effects of those lords' defeat is already noticeable, as their factions have been absorbed by the remaining two lords and unified in an alliance. Pockets of resistance have sprung up in various goblin cities, but the insurmountable force of the United Goblin Front [2.3.003] has dismantled any major attempts at avoiding war. Neutral cities like Tadorin have become the hiding place of displaced resistance members, and Merak is working to secure a network of goblins opposed to the war to make a play in the Heart of the Wilds before all out war breaks loose. In addition, the work that Shura left behind, safely moving refugees (unable or unwilling to fight) out of the wilds and into northern settlements, has fallen to Merak's group, which requires a more formidable force to move the largest of the camps in the southern wilds—the edgelands.

Of course, you agree to take on the task. You will join forces with Merak and attempt to navigate around the heart of the wilds to the southern coast, where a pocket of refugees is stuck behind a blockade. You will then have to take on the goblin lords there, distracting them and forcing them to split their forces while Merak and Raz escort them along one of the major roads back towards Tadorin, at which point you can move more freely towards the northern plains towards another neutral zone.

With the plan set, you have some time to shop before your departure in two days.

Episode 2.4

The Wilds- Tadorin

The next day, you (Slant) sleep in, relishing the comfort of an actual bed. Outside, you (Pusha) have been up for hours, jogging about the town and exploring. At about noon, your party reconvenes at Merak's Place for lunch. It just as packed as it was the day before, but your group easily find somewhere to sit. After some time, Merak strolls over and you quickly revisit your plans. Your group is discussing the final phase of the plan when a loud BOOM silences the entire bar. Patrons look about nervously and Merak gets up to try and calm the crowd. A second BOOM seems to confirm something to Merak as his tone shifts from soothing to hard and direct. Around the room, several similarly dressed goblins stand and—at Merak's order—begin to escort the patrons into the the basement. They comply with little effort and you realize that, as a neutral city during an power struggle, they are likely always prepared to respond to a crisis. Outside, too, you can see people swiftly moving to this or that place, as if all on one accord.

Once the bar has been cleared out, several goblins enter from outside, carrying weapons. They offer salute to Merak and Raz, then line up along the wall. After the group is in line, one steps forward to speak.

"Invasion," She says, "South and west entrances, elite warriors, no lords."

"As expected," Merak replies, "They mean to take Tadorin without sacrificing thier own safety, but that'll be their undoing."

"Something else, sir" The goblin continues, "Civilians got cut off at the temple and they're running out of time."

Merak swears under his breath before speaking again.

"Got it, we'll move as a unit, take fountain and work from there."

The goblin soldiers nod in affirmation, a look of intensity burning in thier eyes.

"If they want Tadorin, they'll have to take it."

<<Add the goblin forces booster packs to your respective decks for this dungeon.>>

[Dungeon ref. XXXX]

Episode 2.5

The Wilds - Tadorin

You help Merak's forces fend off the invasion, rescuing civilians along the way. Despite your efforts, however, they managed to destroy a large portion of the city, including where livestock and supplies are stored. You all realize that this might have been their goal all along, to shake the confidence of the growing resistance and cripple one of the most powerful goblin cities not under the lords' control. This also means that your plans will have to be accelerated. The people of Tadorin can't afford to wait for another attack, and their supplies will have run thin by the time you return with the refugees, so you decide to leave tonight.

Taking smaller, more inconspicuous roads, you head towards the outskirts of the wilds, which is known to be still under Queen Rappala's influence. After some days, you reach the ruins of Ossha [2.5.000], which marks about the halfway point between you and the southern coast. Unfortunately, it seems you must spend more time than you all would like in the ruined town, as your supplies have completely run out and your horses are utterly exhausted.

Offering to go hunting while Raz and Merak make camp, you two trot off into the woods. There is a fair amount of game for this time of year, as the relative absence of people has been a comfort for forest dwelling animals. You easily collect a few more days food, with plans to come out the next day, too. Before you head back, however, something catches your (Slant) attention.

There seems to be a voice calling out to you, beckoning you further into the snow-laden woods. You follow the voice's command, diligently making your way through the trees until the air begins to warm, yet, the voice continues on. You walk and walk until the air begins to feel HOT and you notice that the snow has melted away and the grass has withered below your feet. You now stand looking through the trees at what appears to be a vast desert. Surely, you think, this is impossible, yet the further you go, the more winter seems to fade away. Above, where it was overcast before, there is now not a single cloud in the sky. You shed your heavy coat and cloak.

The sun feels good on your skin.

...

You (Pusha) watch in horror as your partner suddenly stops mid conversation and begins walking, no, RUNNING into the woods. You give chase, but you're not fast enough and you lose her in the trees. Desperately, you call out, but she's nowhere to be found, and the constant snow has already covered up her tracks. You curse under your breath and jog back to Raz and Merak.

Episode 2.6

??? - ???

Cruel desert winds whip at your exposed skin as you walk under the midday sun. It is incredibly hot, and your winter cloak teeters on the edge of protecting you from the harsh sun and suffocating you itself. You have been walking for who knows how long, following your partner's footsteps in the dense sand. You breathe a stifled sigh of relief when you begin to see what looks like a town in the distance. As you get closer, however, your heart sinks as what looked like a town ends up being a massive set of ruins. Still, it's nice to walk on paved ground, so you quickly make your way past the gates of the place. Somewhere roughly in the center of the ruins, you find your partner, kneeling in front of a strange statue. A plaque below it informs you that the statue is a depiction of the **Aether Hawk** [2.6.000], a bird-like deity. You shake her shoulder, but she does not respond. Leaning in closer, you can hear that she is muttering something.

"Do not disturb her." You hear from behind you. You turn to see a creature, tall and hunched, and covered in desert-farer's gear step out from behind some ruins. He points at the statue. "It calls to her. She must answer."

You're in disbelief. You ask the creature how in the world could a statue be calling to your partner, but it merely shrugs.

"When a god calls, its people listen."

"So, is she one of them?" You ask, a sudden realization dawning upon you. "One of the Arcanus?"

"It appears so."

"And who are you?"

"Wanderer."

The sun calls your name.

You answer.

You suddenly find yourself kneeling at a strange statue in the middle of what appears to be some massive ruins. You stand, unsteady, but your partner catches you in her arms and helps you regain your balance.

"Did I miss something?" You ask, your head still spinning. "Where are we?"

"Home," A strange creature who you hadn't yet seen answers. It offers you a canteen and you greedily drink it, suddenly aware of the blistering heat and a growing dryness in your mouth.

You two talk with the Wanderer, and it explains that, if Slant truly did hear the voice of the Aether Hawk calling to her, then she must be a descendant of the aether magic wielding humans who were wiped out in the Great War. Of course, this is hard for you both to believe, but you cannot deny what you saw and heard.

"But, I have a home." You say. "I'm an outlander, adopted to a family in the citadel."

"But where in the outlands, child? Perhaps, here." It replies, waving its hands to the ruins. "Do you know for sure?"

"I," You pause for a moment. You realize that you really don't know for sure.

...

It's night, and the sun is well tucked into the horizon. You sit around a blazing fire with your partner and the strange creature. They are silent, looking at you expectantly. You sigh, and begin your tale.

It's a warm summer evening, and you are sitting in a tree overlooking the 12th Ward Orphanage, a home for children displaced after the Great War. The sting of tears burns your eyes as you tenderly bandage your ankles. Even with the thick paper, blood seeps through and stains your boots crimson.

You watch the other children run about the orphanage's backyard, playing in the setting sun. The smiles on their faces taunt you.

You're different.

You know that.

From outside.

That makes you terrible.

A terrible child from a terrible place.

Who could want something so terrible?

Someone approaching snaps you out of your daydream. Below, a man with wild hair and thick-rimmed glasses looks up at you. He holds out his hand and you hiss at him, recoiling further into the tree.

"Fine, we'll have it your way." He says, before jumping onto the tree. He climbs, grunting and sweating. His form is all wrong, he wastes his energy, he dirties his clothes. You want to run, but you stay. When he reaches your branch he is an awkward mess. His hair is tousled and his glasses hang askew. This makes you laugh in a way that you haven't before. He holds out his hand again, and you take it.

It's a palace, you think. His home—your home—is a palace. The walls are massive and slope into careful archways. The rooms are oddly sized and shaped, with some only being big enough for you. He carries your things into a room near his own. It's easily three times the size of the room you shared at the orphanage, and it's all yours. You jump on the bed, but he doesn't scold you, he joins you. You spill the broth, but he doesn't whip you, he makes more. You cry in the night, but he doesn't hush you or hit you with the broom, he cries with you.

Before long, he is your Papa, and you proudly write your name in your notebooks. Before long, you don't cry in the night. Before long, you are strong.

*Papa tells you that you are from the outside, but that isn't so bad. Inside the walls, people have roles, they must function, there is no room to **just be**. Outside, you can be.*

Soon papa will take you to the outside. You'll search for your home, and you'll see the world. Soon, you will be able to choose a life for yourself. You won't need to fit in, or obey. You can just be.

You hug papa, thanking him for saving you from the 12th Ward.

He coughs.

...

You abruptly end your story. The next part is always too much for you, and besides, it's late.

The next morning, the Wanderer walks with your party through the ruins. He seems quite knowledgeable about the aether humans, as well as the power they held. Apparently, deep in the ruins is a tomb where their knowledge of the powerful magic was stored just before the all out war broke out. He had been searching for it, but found that he could not penetrate the deepest recesses of the ruins without running into desert-dwelling bandits that have made their home in the heart of the ruined city. He isn't quite sure what's in the tomb, but is certain that it will be of value to you all.

Despite the clock ticking on your arrangement with Raz and Merak's forces, you decide to aid the creature in hopes that the spoils will aid you in your plight against the goblin lords. <<Set aside Raz, Merak, and Goblin forces cards. Add Wanderer assist cards to your decks.>>

Episode 2.7

Outlands - Scorched Lands - Arcanus Ruins

Trekking through the deep sand, your party makes its way south, out of the ruined town and towards a temple sunken into the earth. Even a fair ways away, you can tell that the temple is massive. It's pyramid-shaped and surrounded by a dense complex of rooms and pathways, some of which have begun to crumble. Atop the pyramid is a gilded Arcanus Wing, it's beak turned upward to the midday sun. Once you're close enough to make out the silhouettes of various creatures—goblins, maybe? Insectids?—you halt, crouching behind an exposed pillar. You can't tell for sure, but you both silently agree that the Wanderer's estimations might have been a bit...modest. The grounds are teeming with bandits of all sizes, and they appear to be steadfast Ed Lynch protecting the innards of the temple.

"Can we really do this?" You (Pusha) ask, putting a hand on the Wanderer's shoulder. "You don't look like much of a fighter."

You (slant) nod, looking at the Wanderer's clumsy appearance.

"Worry not," The creature confidently responds. "I've been in my fair share of scuffles." It says, revealing—just for a moment—rows of cruel teeth barely hidden behind it's mask as it turns to talk to you two.

"Enough said."

Slinking closer to the complex, you can see that every possible entrance is either boarded up or guarded. Furthermore, the Wanderer informs you that the one time it got slightly too close to the temple, the guards took one look at him and shut a gate covering the temple's entrance without so much as a word. They seem well trained, which makes you both even more curious as to what is inside.

<<It looks like, to enter the temple at all, you will have to clear the entire outside while remaining in stealth. If you do not remain in stealth, you must restart the temple. Once inside, you may proceed normally.>>>

Episode 2.8

Outlands - Scorched Lands - Arcanus Ruins

You ascend the long stairway to the core of the temple. It is a massive room leading directly to a terrace that wraps around the top of the pyramid. Inside, anything valuable and/or movable has been pillaged. The only thing remaining is a chest made of heavy stone. It's clear that someone has been hard at work trying to open it, but it remains sealed—although by what means you two aren't sure. You two look at the Wanderer, expectantly. He shrugs with all four of his arms.

"Never expected to make it this far." He says, stooping to trace his hand along the smooth stone. "I thought perhaps you might know what to do, Slant."

You (slant) pause for a moment, thinking. Remembering what Raz taught you about your connection to aether power, you close your eyes and begin to focus. Before long, the air around you begins to twist as you feel the ancient energy flowing into you. By now, this is familiar—well, maybe not quite. In fact, you've never felt **this much** energy flowing into you, no matter how many times you've called upon your ancestral abilities. You begin to glow, dimly at first, then bright like a beacon. Your hair and clothes begin to lift, as if you are suddenly becoming weightless and floating away. When you open your eyes, the energy releases and spreads out into the air with a whoosh!

After a moment, the box slowly slides open, the top moving as if compelled by some ethereal force. Tentatively, you all walk over and peer inside. There are several items and a short message written on a plaque lying on a bed of sorts. It reads:

[To those seeking power untold. Choose one relic, and only one, to hold. Leave the rest, and abandon this tomb. Heed these words, or face Doom.]

Oddly enough, "Doom" is capitalized. You decide that you'd better follow instructions. Out of the Six items, choose one each.

1. Roht's Blessing [2.7.000]
2. Ganryu's Promise [2.7.001]
3. Fomua's Strength [2.7.002]
4. Viruo's Fortitude [2.7.003]
5. Tarok's Curse [2.7.004]
6. Zor's Ring [2.7.005]

You both choose your items, and the Wanderer chooses from what remains. (Roll 1d4, assigning an item to each number in ascending order. Keep note of the result.) The remaining items sink into the chest's bedding until they are no longer visible, then the chest itself sinks into the sandy floor and disappears. You wonder if your spoils were worth the trip, and with your targeant now complete, your thoughts return to the mounting goblin war. You ask the wanderer where you are in relation to the Edgelands, and he indicates that the desert wraps around the bottom rim of the Wilds, so it should lead you right there.

Standing on the pyramid's terrace, you can see that the desert stretches on for quite some time, but that beyond that there are noticeable patches of blue and green.

"How will we get there in time?" You (slant) ask, trying to gauge the distance from your vantage point. "It took us long enough just to get to the temple on foot."

"Yeah," You (pusha) add, "and i doubt we'll make it very far with our supplies."

The Wanderer thinks about this for a moment, then looking out over the desert, points to a stable in the complex below.

"I don't think you'll have to walk."

*Episode 2.9**The Wilds--Outerlands--Raatu*

The city of Raatu is the only neutral zone this far from Citadel, and it's easy to see why. Unlike Tadorin, Raatu is little more than a port town. The goblin people's homes are simple and cozily mingle between a massive beach and the forest. It's too far away from the heart of the Wilds to have any military power and completely unfortified. As such, the people there live the carefree lives of those uninvolved with war. They fish, and hold festivals, and eagerly greet travelers with little suspicion. Raatu is the last place any sort of revolution might take holds, and that makes it perfect.

When you arrived, tired and covered in sand, you found that Raz and Merak had just arrived a couple of days prior, and were anxiously awaiting your return. After a nights rest, you met with the two and updated each other on the mission's progress. Apparently, forces under control of the reaminging lords are becoming suspicious about areas of the outerlands out of their control. Every few days or so, a patrol sweeps through the the area on horseback, to Raz and his forces have had to hide out. The townspeople don't seem to have connected the arrival of Raz and his people with the patrols, so for now you all are relatively safe. Since the area is accustomed to many races visiting for leisure, it also appears that you may roam the town freely, however, Raz warns, it'd be best if you moved on from Raatu as soon as possible.

So, you plan to head out tomorrow.

Episode 2.10

The Wilds--Outerlands--Raatu (exiting)

The next day, your party departs Raatu. Posing as a caravan of nomads, you all hide inside of the wagon as a couple of the more inconspicuous members of the troop sits out front. The charade seems successful, as over the course of the trip you hear the patrollers gallop by a few times, exchanging no more than a casual greeting.

You arrive at your destination a couple of days later. You are at an beach naturally enclosed by large sand dunes and thick patches of trees. Without a word, Raz, Merak, and other goblins set about carrying crates of supplies out of the wagon. They set up torches around the beach and several of them fan out to guard the area. As the sun sets on the beach, a slow trickle of goblins of all shapes and sizes emerge from the forest and behind the dunes. As they congregate, some of them eye you suspiciously, others avoid making eye contact at all.

Before long, the sun has set and a sizeable congregation of goblins are standing in a loose pack, nervously chittering away in hushed voices. They quiet down as Raz and Merak address them, speaking with urgency in their native tongue.

You (pusha) can't make out a word he is saying, and you (slant) are lost in the complex grammar of the language, but it doesn't matter because the determined look on the crowd's faces says it all.

They're ready to act.

A bit later, a goblin you don't recognize emerges from the woods, bounding over to Raz and Merak with haste. He speaks rapidly between gasping breaths. He's sweating and his clothes are matted to his deep green skin. After he's apparently said what he needed to, he offers a stiff salute to the two goblins, and they nod back. With a signal, the sentries begin to quickly return and nearby troop members begin deftly packing up camp. The sudden commotion catches the refugees' attention, who seem eager to get a move on.

Walking over to you, Raz relays the unfamiliar goblin's message. Apparently, preparations for the refugees' route through the lord-controlled lands have been prepared, but their safety can only be guaranteed for a small window of time. In effect, everyone needs to get moving immediately for the best chance of success. The darkness will conceal the large group's movements to a degree, but your distraction is instrumental to ensuring that the lords don't catch wind of the escape in time.

The unfamiliar goblin walks over to you, leading a pair of jet black horses. He's recovered a bit, but is obviously shaken. Without a word, he hands each of you to the reigns of one of the horses and steps away.

"You ride out directly into the heart," Raz says, handing each of you a small lantern. "Keep to the road, charge directly into Pichu. The ruckus will disrupt the lord's control over the heart of the wild just long enough for a nondescript caravan to ride through on the backroads."

He adds, "Under no circumstances do you face the lords. They are wildly powerful and you will have no backup."

You realize that you're heading right into the eye of a deadly storm. The lords will be the strongest in their own domain and will have any the resources to outlast any prolonged fight. Even with your enhanced abilities and what you've learned from Raz, you will surely perish if you face them. Still, you'll have to come dangerously close to achieve your goal.

Episode 2.11

The Heart of the Wilds

The night whizzes by you as you both gallop frantically through the heart of the wilds. It has been hours since you departed from the Raz and Merak's group. So far, you have ridden through several small towns, causing a stir as your horses racket about. By now, you're sure that word is travelling to the lords, but it seems that you might breach Pichu in time to hold an advantage, however small.

After a while, you begin your approach to Pichu. Even at night, the city is a sight to behold. The forest slopes upward towards the fortress-like city, making it look distinctly like a crown, hauntingly towering over the treetops. You notice that the gates are wide open, an arrogant choice that's telling of your adversaries. Even with the guards stationed at it, the city is open to invasion at anytime. If anything, they likely welcome it.

You two stash your horses a ways outside the gate and continue on foot. The trees provide excellent cover as you slip into traveller's gear that conceals your appearance. Approaching the gate slowly, the guards ahead catch sight of you and beckon you over.

"Papers?"

"Just visiting."

"Mm, gotcha. Inn's that way, registration will process your information."

"Thanks."

As you enter the city, you hear from behind you.

"Don't make any trouble."

Pichu, even at this time of night, is incredible. Apparently, it sprang up almost overnight when the remaining two lords forces, and has since attracted goblinkind from around Apothis. As such, the city is absolutely bustling with activity despite the winter cold and the time of night. Goblins of all sorts cheerily mill about the busy city, and the sound of music and conversation emanates from all sorts of establishments along the way. You realize that even the citizens of Pichu, a city controlled by warmongers, are likely innocent in this entire struggle. Perhaps you had expected the city to be a den of evil not unlike the caves outside of Kaht, or at the very least, you had expected it to be an easy decision to disrupt the citizens lives for your cause.

You were wrong.

The large double doors of a nearby pub suddenly open and a pair of goblins careen out, stumbling down the stairs into the street. You both watch as they thrash about, screaming back into the pub in their native tongue. A annoyed-looking goblin that you assume is the owner of the pub shouts back as he steps out into the street. He waves his hand at some nearby soldiers and they immediately march over, surrounding the two goblins still screaming. The pub owner talks with one of the soldiers before nodding and returning inside with a loud CRACK! By now, the scene has caught the attention of some of the goblins passing by. They stop and stare with a look that slowly shifts from curious to worried. You soon understand why they are worried, because the two goblins are no longer screaming, but on thier knees apparently begging at the guards. Through what clearly sobs, you (slant) make out that they are apologizing profusely, and attempting to explain something or other about a misunderstanding. Thier words, however, do not seem to budge the soldiers, who stare down at them in disgust. After a moment, one of the guards gives a hand signal and the circle tightens so that you can't clearly see what's happening. Still, you can hear the two goblins' cries become more desperate.

Behind you, you notice that some of the crowd are taring wide-eyed at the scene while other are hastily walking by, trying their best to ignore what's happening. Without so much as a word, the soldiers

suddenly begin striking the two goblins with heavy batons that had been sheathed on their backs. The two goblins cry out in pain, sobbing at the soldier's relentless attack. You (Pusha) step forward, almost forgetting that you are in disguise, but your partner hastily grabs your arm. Still, the scene is too much for you to bear. The two goblins have long since stopped pleading and now lay in a heap, moaning with pain as the soldiers rain down blow after blow on them. You shrug off your partner's hand, rushing to the crumpled goblins' aid. In a moment, you are charging the group of goblins, swiping at them with your weapon. They abandon their task and reform around you, ready to begin their assault. From outside the circle, you can hear your partner approaching. She deftly slides in between the soldier's legs, brandishing her weapon with a look of determination. You needed to cause a distraction and it seems like this is it.

<<Fight off each wave of soldiers on the main road until the lords are forced to face you.>>

Episode 2.12

The Heart of the Wilds--Pichu

You two fend off wave after wave of soldiers. Your battle has caused quite a ruckus and cleared out the entire main road, which has by now become a battleground. When it finally seems that no further waves of soldiers will be coming, you take a moment to catch your breath.

"Think it's over?" You (slant) say between breaths.

"I hope so," You (pusha) respond. "I am nearly at my limits."

"What about the lords?"

"Yeah", you hear from above you, "What about us?"

You hadn't even noticed that tall, slender goblin's approach, and now she is above you, looking down with an air of contempt.

"I hope you outlanders have a really good reason for making trouble in my city." She says, "And for your sake, I'd better like the answer."

Before you can respond, you're again surprised to find that fresh waves of soldiers have arrived, this time from both sides, and are surrounding you. They dutifully form around you, leaving a rather large gap that is filled by yet another intimidating goblin. This one is about the size of a small giant and covered in scars of all sizes. You note that he is wearing similar armor to the female goblin above you.

"Well, you wanted our attention." He says, through clenched teeth. "Speak!"

The scarred goblin approaches you two, cracking his knuckles and revealing sets of devastating claws on each hand. The female goblin joins him, brandishing an incredibly long gun with a similar design to your own (slant).

You are not certain you will be able to win this fight, but at the very least, you have to survive until you are sure the refugees made it through.

<<Survive 15 turns to succeed.>>

*Episode 2.13**The Heart of the Wilds--Pichu*

The lords by themselves are terrifying opponents, and the battle pushes you both well beyond your limits. However, just as it seems that your next moments may be your last, a commotion at the northern gate of Pichu steals everyone's attention. A single soldier, galloping at great speeds, rushes towards the circle of soldiers, who step aside as he rides up to you and the lords. Still poised to fight, the lady goblin glances at the disheveled soldier.

"What is it?" She says, a look of annoyance crossing her face. "Can't you see we're busy?"

"Apologies, ma'am," The soldier sputters, "But we received word from one of the outposts that the refugees we had been looking for have escaped through the heart and into a neutral zone!"

She curses under her breath and straightens up.

"So you two were a distraction, huh?" She says, regaining her composure. "I'm done with this. Lock em up and prepare to ride out in the morning."

The large male goblin and several soldiers move to apprehend you as the lady goblin turns to talk to the soldier again.

Without thinking, you (pusha) use the last bit of your strength to shake off the soldiers and hastily grab your partner's arm. You thrust her forward, through the crowd towards the gate you came in through. Then, brandishing your weapon, you engage the soldiers, giving her enough of a window to escape the city.

"Don't look back!" You say, as the soldiers descend upon you.

Episode 2.14

Centaurian Plains

The Centaurian planes are, without a doubt, one of most beautiful places you have ever seen. The rolling hills are lush, free of the influence of society. The Centaurian people--almost literally half horse and half human--prefer to live in constantly traveling packs, and have thus preserved the integrity of the lands they call home. There are no roads, and the few structures there are happen to be only temporary, and leave with Centaurians they belong to. The Centaurians do not take from nature what is not absolutely necessary, as they consider their intelligence a responsibility to protect the land. Furthermore, being a naturally savvy and athletic race, protect the lands from hostile rule, and preserve its history.

These things (and more) you learn as you ride on the back of a young Centaurian named Li. He bounds ahead of his herd, eagerly chatting away about the Centaurians and their home as you weakly attempt to hold up your end of the conversation.

"...which is why we picked you up in the first place." You realize he has been speaking directly to you for a while now.

"Right." You say, picking at your bandaged arms.

It's important to note that it is uncommon to actually ride a Centaurian as, like most other intelligent races, they do not like being ridden, horse-like appearance notwithstanding. Still, you think, the state he found you in likely left the young centaur no choice and--barring disapproving stares from some of the other centaurs--the choice is appreciated.

It was perhaps a couple weeks ago, maybe more, that you found yourself nearly dying and clinging to your horse for dear life as it barreled through the wilds. The intense battle at Pichu left you heavily injured and incapable of doing much more than goading the horse to continue forward in a general direction. You had discarded the notion of returning to Tadorin to meet with Raz, and instead focused on merely surviving altogether.

At a particularly small town you managed to stop your horse and heave yourself off its back, limping to a local doctor. You had managed to evade death using your magic ability, but without extensive rest--and serious attention--you would have surely succumbed to your wounds eventually. For the money you had, you managed to get patched up and earned a stay in an infirmary for a few days, after which you could move about better, but found that your horse had wandered off and was by then beyond searching for.

From a young goblin passing through, you heard of a mass exodus of goblin people that had taken place a few days before your arrival. Pointing to the far north of your location on a map, the goblin indicated that he had heard that the group was heading to centaurian domain. As your luck would have had it, a pack of centaurians were departing a town over, and you managed to hitch a ride, at first walking among them, but eventually being carried by Li after lagging too far behind.

Rounding a particularly tall hill in the rolling grasslands, you begin to see a great deal of motion in the distance. From Li's back, you can see a few hundred goblins--some you immediately recognize--congregating around a peculiar monument. As you approach the group, a couple of the goblins ride out to you on horses.

"Welcome back." They say.

EPISODE 3: CALAMITY

Episode 3.1

Heart of the Wilds—Pichu

"Psst." A voice calls out to you from the infinite darkness. "Hey!" It says, with more force this time. "Look a-live!"

A sharp jab in your side snaps you awake. You take a moment to catch your bearings, absentmindedly rubbing your side.

"Slant?" You say, and then, "Oh, right."

The owner of the voice leans out of the darkness, poking his head through the bars from his cell to yours. He's clutching a long, slender stick, threatening to poke you again. Swatting at the stick, you ask him what he wants, and in the dim light of the prison you see him shrug his slender goblin shoulders.

"Dunno", just making sure you didn't die on me.

"Not yet," You reply. "What day is it?"

"Hell if I know."

"Weren't you keeping count with that stick of yours, Hess?"

"Meh, can't count past twenty or so."

To this, you are silent. Then, you curse under your breath.

"Excuse you."

"Three months, I reckon, miss." Another voice calls from somewhere else in the room. "Ya two got 'ere just a bit after me, so ah bout three months."

"Thanks, old man." You say, lifting yourself off of the dirty stone floor of your cell and locating a small basin on one end. You splash the cold water into your face, stifling a cry as it burns your eye.

"Think we'll be here long?" You say, after settling down again.

"Depends if the executioner's on holiday." Hess replies, earning a fair bit of laughter from most of the inmates.

A while later, a stern-looking goblin enters the room pushing a cart with food on it. He tosses a bundle of stale bread and cheese and just barely edible cheese into each cell, and before long, the sounds of the food being hastily eaten.

"Kaifer's cheese." Hess says between bites, "Never liked the stuff when I was out there, but now," He pauses to take a large bite of the yellow brick, "It's almost a delicacy."

You smile at this, breaking off a piece of your own cheese and tossing it his way. "Always in good spirits, huh, Kess."

"No sense in making a fuss. We're already on death row."

In the distance, the old man coughs.

Some slight movement in the cell to your left catches your attention. In the shadows, you can just barely see your other neighbor shift slowly, reaching out a hand and quickly snatching up the bundle of food. Instead of eating it, however, the person just holds it, staring at the food in the darkness as if it is speaking to them. After a moment, the food appears to turn to dust and is carried off by small draft in the

room. You gasp at this, causing the creature suddenly turn to you, and then sink back into the shadows of their cell.

"Don't worry about her." Kess calls from our right. "She's just a bit odd, we call her Pokey."

"She's a devil!" The old man says, still chewing on his first bit of bread. "Never seen anythin like 'er."

You ignore his comment and offer part of your meal to her. "Is that your name? Pokey?" You ask, setting the bits of food down at the edge of her cell. She leans over to grab the food, briefly exposing her face to the light. Her appearance catches you entirely off guard. Her face appears almost mask-like, with massive hollows for eyes and a plain, unchanging expression. You gasp quietly.

"Sounds like you dun gone an seen 'er, huh."

Episode 3.1B

Heart of the Wilds—Pichu

The next day is the weekend, which you can tell because they don't bring you all any food, and there seems to be significantly less heavy boots stomping about overhead. As usual, you, Kess, and the other inmates while away your time making conversation with the occasional bit of morbid humor. You do notice, however, that Pokey does not seem to participate. In fact, you haven't heard her speak or otherwise address anyone for the supposed three months you have been here, leaving you to wonder whether the exchange you had yesterday had actually happened at all.

Around midday, a small sliver of paper slides under the door to the prison. The goblin in the closest cell, Remi, picks it up and reads it. He makes a show of scanning it a few times, turning it over as if it's only part of some larger story he's expecting to find on some third side. After a few moments of this, he addresses the room.

"An update from Goss" He says, referring to his husband who occasionally slips letters into the prison on the weekends. "Another battle broke out between the UGF and the Royal Army, this time closer to the heart. He's escaped to Withrack in the north, and others have taken refuge in other towns outside of the wilds"

Kess whistles low. "World's going to shit and I'm sitting here on my ass!"

You think about your partner, Raz, Merak, and the goblins you had been helping. You think about Afi, and how lost he must be in all of this. You wonder how they are doing.

"There's more," Goss continues, "After—ahem—the incident, security has been weakened, so we are being moved."

"Moved?" Someone asks, incredulously.

"Seem's so." He replies, "Citizens have been slowly evacuating already, and we're up next."

"Well I do hope they remember to pack the travel guillotine." Kess says.

Early the next day, a squad of goblins escorts you all out of your cells. As you're being loaded into the back of a large, fortified, wagon, you take a final look at Pichu. The streets are hauntingly empty, with the doors to houses and businesses hastily left open. The only people left are either being escorted to the gates at that moment, or are the ones doing the escorting.

"Where are the lords?" You whisper to Kess. He shrugs and replies, "Hopefully not where we're going."

You are riding seven deep in the uncomfortable wagon for what seems like an eternity. The inner portion is made up of a sturdy wood reinforced with iron, so it is pitch black, and you are chained to the floor, which altogether gives you the distinct feeling of floating in purgatory, waiting for the doors to the wagon to open again. Suddenly, there is a deafening CRACK and you feel the wagon lift off of the ground and begin to tumble. It feels as if your entire world has been quarter-pocketed as you fall into the pitch black emptiness. Finally, the wagon lands on solid ground, shattering one side. You lay in a heap with the other inmates, and scramble to get up and take a peek through the newly created opening.

"Holy..." You hear Kess say as you all peer out of the wagon. Outside, the caravan is caught up in a full scale battle, with UGF and Royal soldiers locked in deadly combat. You struggle against your chains, pulling them from the splintered wood. You're free, but your hands are still bound.

"Catch!" One of the other prisoners says, throwing you bundle of keys. "Guards are down, we can get out of here."

Using the overturned cart as cover, you skirt around the rapidly expanding battlefield.

"Wait," Kess says, pointing at another cart on the otherside of the skirmish. "Saw the guards load the chest with our gear in it. We won't have a chance at escape if we're unarmed."

*Nodding silent agreement, you and the other prisoners weave around the decimated wagons and people milling about. Surprisingly, the chest opens quite easily and you rearm yourself. **Now, you're ready to fight your way out.** <<Add the "Kess" assist card to your deck. >>*

You're on the outskirts of the battlefield, but it seems that you won't be able to make it out without fighting. Furthermore, the only intact wagon is the one that the warden is locked in battle in front of. <<Make your way through the skirmish, steal the warden's wagon, and escape!>>

<<Pre-boss text: Your party fights through the waves of soldiers as they clash on the open field. Both sides are strong, and you lose a couple on the way, but your combat prowess keeps the group moving ever forward. At last, you come upon the warden, an aging goblin and talented swordsman, locked in deadly combat with the leader of the attacking human forces. They turn to you as you emerge from the throng of people, at first surprise, then disdain spreading across their faces.

"Sorry to cut in, boys," You confidently say as you strut over to them, drawing your weapon, "but we'll be taking that cart."

The two combatants exchange glances between themselves and the horse-drawn cart behind them, but before either can speak, a human soldier approaches them with someone familiar tucked under his arm.

"Lord Rumble," He says, struggling to keep hold of the captive, "We've recovered the Tohkka girl."

Seeing this, you cut in again. "Scratch that. We'll be taking the cart, and the girl."

(This is a three person battle, which means that the rules for a standard battle change. Firstly, to roll for initiative, roll three d20s, and have the person with the highest number go first and so on. Then, for simulating enemy attacks, flip a coin and attribute heads to an attack towards you, and tails as an attack towards whatever enemy isn't currently attacking. Defeat both enemies to proceed!)>>

[Dungeon 3.1B]

Episode 3.2A

Centaurian Plains--Sacred Goblin Grounds

You can't believe your eyes. In the north, miles away from the the wilds, is a community of hundreds of goblins. They live in similar homes as the centaurs, thier community seeming to emanate from a strange spire in the center.

"This is all thanks to you," Raz says, leading you and Li to the center of the community.

"Pusha, too." You say, quietly. "I wouldn't even be here."

"Sorry"

Once you are closer to the center, Merak approaches, still just as relaxed as ever. He looks as if he is about to ask you something, but stops after glancing at Raz, and then back at you. He settles for a simple greeting.

"There's a lot we need to tell you, Slant." Raz says as he and Merak help you off of Li's back. "But first, there someone you have to meet."

...

The goblin spire, a monument and tool of ancient goblin civilization, sits quietly rusting in the midday sun. It's deceptively large, with a tip that comes to a fine point at least 40 feet in the air. The surface of the spire is a sort of metal, twisted an incomprehensible amount of times so as to look more akin to a spool of wire than a structure. Following Raz and Merak inside, you are amazed at how well the intricately wound metal keeps out light, making torches necessary from that point on. You three continue through a door on one side of the main room, which, itself, is a sort of prayer hall, with an altar and various tapestries affixed to the walls of the spire.

The stairway beyond the door seems to spiral endlessly into the earth, and—oddly enough—no one is talking, which gives the trip a foreboding air. When the stairs finally end, the temperature has dropped considerably and the temple-like decor has dissolved into a more sparse design with subtle markings along the smooth, darkly colored walls. You follow the goblins through a neatly placed door and down a hallway that slopes precariously downward. By this point, you estimate that you must be below the outskirts of the camp above. Further still, you emerge into a wide, circular room with an incredibly low ceiling. So low, in fact, that you of all people feel as if you could reach it with a short hop.

In the center of the room, on a circular platform, is a small bed with someone resting in it and breathing heavily. You take the continued silence as a cue to merely wait and watch, but a small, raspy cough from the person in the bed seems to break the mood. Suddenly, with a panicked look on their faces, the two goblins rush up to the bed, leaving you on the sort of catwalk that extends from the door to the platform in the center. The two goblins fret over the person in bed, checking their pulse and offering them water. From behind them, you can see the thin, pale skin of an elder goblin. As you finally catch up with Raz and Merak, you gasp as it becomes clear who is in the bed.

You startle Raz and Merak, who seemed to have forgotten about you entirely. They wheel around, and Raz coughs nervously.

"You must be the young sorceress." The person says, sitting up slowly. "Shura told me much about you."

"You knew Shura!?" You say, your voice echoing through the structure.

"Of course, dear." She says, smiling. "I am the queen."

Sudden realization dawns on you as you begin to connect your past with the present. Shura had approached you in Lafira, begging that you teach her magic in exchange for gems. You reluctantly agreed, but soon you two became close friends. Too close, perhaps, as the tense relationship between goblin and human painted you as a traitor to the human queen, or some sort of spy for the goblin resistance. So, to prove your loyalty, you took on the role as envoy of the queen, a task that had, ironically, lead to you joining the goblins in their plight anyway.

In that dimly lit room, you spoke with the queen, Raz, and Merak. First, she explained her "death". During that time, she was pregnant with her 6th child, but because the war dragged on longer than anticipated, she entered the late stages of her pregnancy while still attempting to lead the goblins. This led to a power imbalance as the lords, her children, struggled to fill the vacuum and continue her work on the frontlines. To put it mildly, their forces were weakened, which is why Raz ended up stepping forward to lead the army.

With the child due any day, the goblin queen focused on using her substantial psycho-magical ability to support the troops from a safer position. Still, during a certain battle, the army's backline was flanked and her group came under fire, during which time it was said that she perished, along with the child. This, the goblin queen insisted firmly, was far from the truth. Before the battle, she had gone into labor and was having the child as enemy forces arrived. The lord that was protecting her had—conveniently so—been out tending to a matter nearby and was unable to assist in the struggle. So, the queen was mortally wounded and left to die, and her child was kidnapped.

Another gasp from you interrupts the story. "Why would they take your child?" You ask.

"Because of the power he has." She says, reaching into the air with one of her hands. "Even now, I can feel it."

"My little brother is out there, somewhere." Raz adds, "He's a Dreamweaver, a very special and very powerful goblin."

"So powerful that I can pinpoint his exact location, but I cannot go there."

"Where is he?" You ask, although you have some idea already.

"Lafira, the human citadel."

Episode 3.2B

The outlands, country road

Your party breathes a deep sigh of relief as you exit the wilds. You have been traveling for hours nonstop, and the tiny bit of food that was left in the warden's cart has already gone between the four of you.

"Never thought I'd be excited to leave goblin country." Less says, squinting into the setting sun as he stands atop the cart as lookout. "Although I guess it doesn't help us much if we starve before doing anything with our newfound freedom."

"Goss said to meet him at Withrack [3.2.000], which should be over the next hill." Remi says, albeit a bit impatiently.

"We'll be fine," You add, "after all, we made it through that mess back there."

The other two goblins agree, trying to put the battle out of thier minds.

"War's broken out." Remi says after a while, "Goss says he wants to head to the north, says there's a pretty stable camp up there. What'll you folks do."

"Drink myself into a coma," Goss replies, "been working for me so far."

"What about the camp?"

"Screw em, they'll just get swept up into the war anyway. I'd rather die with a drink in my hand, face deep in some—"

"You don't mean that," You cut in. "Come on, Kess."

"Yeah, well what about you?" He retorts. "Your friend is long gone by now, and if she even survived what are the chances of seeing her again in all of this shit?"

"I agree," You say, which catches Kess off guard. He begins to apologize, but you continue, "Slant is strong, she can take care of herself. Besides, there is something else I need to take care of."

As you say this, you absentmindedly turn Afi's ring over in your hand. It's strange markings catch in the orange light.

"That ring." An unfamiliar voice says, causing you three to turn around.

"I never thought I'd see the day," Kess says, looking at the small creature riding in the back of the cart, "That Pokey would talk!" He feigns a faint and rolls onto the floor of the cart dramatically. Theatrics aside, something else caught your attention.

"Do you--do you recognize my brother's ring?" You ask her, your voice trembling slightly. "Have you seen him?" You rattle off a quick description of your brother, to which the young Tohkka nods.

"Seen him. Know him."

"Is he safe? Is he--" You hesitate to finish the question.

"Sleeping."

"What? Where?"

Slowly, Pokey raises a finger and points northeast, towards Lafira, the capital of the land. Again, she reiterates, "Sleeping until calamity."

Her words hang in the air for what feels like an eternity. Kess mouths the word silently, still on the floor of the cart. You all get the feeling that something terrible is on its way, and what's worse, you're inclined to rush straight towards it.

...

Withrack is a medium sized city not terribly far from Kaht. You only realize this because of the various advertisements for "Ludoc's enchanted inn" sprinkled about the town square. Objectively speaking, Withrack is quite insignificant. It's too far from either the mountain or snake pass to be worth fighting over, and it's hand in the lumber industry is minor at best, despite being fairly close to the wilds and its wealth of trees. These things your party knows, which is why you are surprised to find the city half destroyed. Homes have been caved in by mortar fire, as if it had been raided by the Queen's army herself. Still, the town is functioning, if only barely.

Seeing as you are the only human, your companions hide in the back of the cart as you fully enter the city. Following Remi's directions, you navigate to a smallish bar on the north end of town. It's one of the only structures still fully standing, although from it's appearance you can't exactly see how. It's an incredibly old bar made up of the sort of wood that seems to find a new way to creak every time you step on it. Inside, there's more dust than patrons, but there are people there. An old man with a bandaged wrist and a woman busily writing at a booth are perhaps the most notable people there. The others seem to be more like furniture than anything else.

You approach the bar, which is being attended by a young-ish woman with her hair pulled back in a tight bun. She looks at you with disdain,

"Need something, outlander?" She says, fishing a (relatively) clean glass from below the bar. "Or are you just going to take up space."

Her comments offend you, but without letting it show, you slide her the strip of paper that Remi handed to you. Instead of picking it up, she glances quickly at it, then walks swiftly away to a door at the far end of the bar. You wonder where she is going until, with no small amount of annoyance, you hear the woman call out to you.

"Coming?"

Sheepishly, you follow the woman through the door and up some stairs to the upper part of the building, which seems to have living quarters.

"How many of you are there?" She asks as you enter a parlor with another bar and some old, but comfortable-looking couches.

"Four."

"Races?"

"One human, two goblin, one tohkka."

She raises her brow at this. "Don't be a jackass. A tohkka?"

"Yeah. A tohkka." You say with some force. "And we're all very hungry." You add for emphasis. The woman seems to consider responding in kind to you, but then shakes her head and hands you a couple of keys.

"Goss will put on some stew." She says, turning and heading back downstairs.

Later that night, over stew, you all sit at a long table in the parlor. In addition to the young-ish woman, who you learn is named Miralo, Goss joins you as you recount the events that took place after you received his letter.

"It's a good thing I got the letter to you, then." He says, helping himself to a mouthful of stew. "Whole thing went south, fast. Half of the wilds turned into a warzone, Queen's army is tearing up the southern settlements looking for something that the lords supposedly have." He pauses again for another mouthful of stew. "Can't for the life of me imagine what, though."

"I think we might have an Idea." You say, gesturing to Pokey, who has been quietly "eating" her stew, seemingly oblivious to the discussion around her. At the sudden break in the conversation, however, she looks up, part way through dissolving a particularly large chunk of beef in the strange way that her people do.

"Hm?" She says.

"Excuse me if i'm incorrect, but your people are master engineers and blacksmiths."

"Mhm." She says, seeming to take a bit more interest in the conversation.

"But it's rare to find someone of your kind outside your native lands." She nods to this, and you continue, now addressing the group again. "So I think it might be fair to assume that the queen had been relying on her skills to produce the kinds of weapons that would easily have won any impending war."

Goss nods at this, adding "And this would be especially important, since the weapons cache in the citadel was robbed."

"Right, so under the assumption that goblins took hold of the Tohkka-X weapons, which we at least know to be partially true since we've seen at least two of them, the Queen must have been desperate to get new ones forged as soon as possible." You conclude. "But how did she escape?"

"Black Wave," Pokey says, which strikes a chord with you. "escaped then."

"Pokey," You say, "Could you tell us what actually happened?"

In her peculiar way of speaking, she explains the events of that night from her perspective. She had been being kept in a facility to the northwest of the citadel, a weapons plant masquerading as a lumber company. They even hired some local kids to help out, gave it legitimacy. Since her captors had no reason to assume she spoke the language, they spoke freely around her. Therefore, she was able to silently collect information on the inner workings of this program that no one else could have.

At the plant, Pokey designed and built over 500 weapons of various types using her people's particular method of engineering over the few months she was there. That same location was also intended to be a watchpoint for the rumored Black Road, which was supposedly how goblins in the wilds got hold of black gem powder, a substance that dramatically increases one's combat proficiency and magical ability. This was important, because with it the goblins could use aether magic, which otherwise might have taken decades to develop a talent for, if at all. It's no secret that ancient goblins had access to the devastatingly powerful form of magic called psycho-magic, which was lauded to give the user the ability to manipulate the mind and even reality itself. But outside of a very select few who developed talents with it--most notably the goblin Queen Mu-no, the hero Raz, and the Goblinworxx general Roht [3.2.001], it was an art mostly lost to the modern goblin. This was because of the goblin spires, which had once peppered the land and helped channel aether magic through the goblin people, were destroyed or otherwise rendered useless. With black gem powder, however, one could access that power and more.

As it is also known, black gem powder substantially devastates the mind and body after prolonged use, which was the queen's justification for probing so deep into matters that she might not

have had any official right to investigate. So in that town, the watchpoint communicated directly with the queen, monitoring and investigating a set of shipments that regularly passed through from the far north--elven domain [3.2.002]--along that rumored route.

The queen had an informant, a elf supposedly in the position to reveal the time and location of a major exchange between the lords and the elves. Apparently, the elves had worked out a more potent form of black gem powder, which removed the need to reduce the radiation-filled gem to dust for safe use. This meant that one could consume the entire gem and have a near limitless trove of power at their disposal. For obvious reasons, the lords, which were the most powerful and influential goblins in the land, were to be the first to use this power, with the promise that after taking over the land again, they would give the elves the entire northern sphere as well as a significant chunk of land in the heart of Apothis.

Learning this, and assuming that this had been orchestrated by the queen, she sent her soldiers to make sure the deal didn't happen and recover the gems for herself. In the struggle that broke out between the goblins, elves, and humans, there was a massive explosion at the weapons plant, which destroyed most of the weapons Pokey had made, devastated at least half of the village, and--strangely enough--caused the gems to react in a strange way. Instead of being destroyed, the high explosive energy set off a reaction that released a massive wave of magic energy into the air.

This wave, known as the Black Wave, did a few important things. First, it further disrupted the goblin's dwindling sphere of magic, making aether magic even harder to use, and even less rewarding to learn. Second, the densely concentrated magic caused strange reactions in several of the people closest to the epicenter. One person in particular, the young boy who had been hauling one of the containers of black gems, developed massively evolving psycho-magic abilities on par with that of the Dreamweavers, a fabled race of iltr-powerful goblins. This person was taken to the citadel to be studied. And last, the mystery and chaos surrounding the incident allowed for the Tohkka that was building the weapons to be kidnapped by the goblins. These things, Pokey recounted first hand.

The room was silent as everyone connected the pieces of her story. Between what Raz told you about the great war, and Pokey told you about the Black Wave, the events that had taken place up to this point had begun to make more and more sense. The only question on anyone's mind was, what happens next?

Episode 3.3A

Lafira

Even at night, the citadel is spectacular. A marvel of modern architecture and magical flair, Lafira is the sort of city one only dreams about. From atop a staggeringly tall clock tower, you look down at your former home. At your vantage point, you can see it all, the orphanage, the academy, the royal pavilion, everywhere. You reach your hands out, holding the city in your hands.

"We're ready," Raz says, approaching you from behind. He rests a hand on your shoulders. "We're continuing her work."

"I know," You say, holding the Aether pistol in your hand. "It just feels strange to know that she died here, for this."

"Maybe she knew how important this would be."

"Maybe."

You and Raz go over the plan one more time. Your target is the Temple of Glass, the elaborate town square south of the royal pavilion. Below it is a complex that doubles as the import/export center, with waterway access on the west, south, and north. You'll be diving onto the roof of the amphitheatre, which gives direct access to the shipping complex via the service entrance. You'll make your way there, dropping into a secret passage under the waterways into what is supposed to be the city's power plant. From what the goblin Queen told her, her 6th child is being kept there, powering the city with his passive psycho-magical output. If you can save the child, then the humans will be weakened, and you can force a stalemate that would allow room for peaceful negotiations.

Of course, with everything that happened up until this point, you personally desire a less than peaceful resolution, but Raz urges you to think of the wellbeing of all the people involved.

"Remember, there are innocents down there." He says, drinking a Featherfall potion.

"I know." You say.

"I have to remind myself that, too." He says, and you both jump.

...

With a soft thud, you and Raz land on the amphitheatre. You can feel vibrations from a concert below. Briefly, you remember when you used to be one of the people in there. Locating a door atop the roof, you shoot the lock off, a flash of green light briefly illuminating you and your companion. You locate a small service hatch on the ground level and open it, leaving it propped open after you go through.

"They should be behind us by 20 or so." Raz whispers as you travel along the narrow catwalks above the shipping complex. There are few people below. A couple of guards, but no soldiers, all human. Further into the complex, you descend into the underground shipping yard, which has been carved out of a heavy, smooth stone. You watch ships moving steadily along a long conveyor belt-like construct that tows the ships to and from the main shipping yard. You note that here, working by dim torchlight, are goblins, sweating away in their tattered clothes. You hear Raz suck his teeth.

"I didn't know anything about this," You say.

"I know."

The catwalk deposits you into a large storage yard. Various boxes of materials line the walls, seemingly in no particular arrangement. Everything you've learned about Lafira as of late tells you

otherwise, as you recognize a sort of logic to the boxes. When observed from the catwalk, you can see the maze-like arrangement resolve into a few discrete paths, one of which goes to a corner of the room inaccessible by any of the other paths. You drop in, stealthily taking the correct path. As you two pad along lightly, something begins to nag at you.

"See any guards." You whisper to your companion. He stops, then mouths "No."

As you continue, he seems to be considering this more, then he taps you on the shoulder and whispers to you. "Probably short staffed from the war."

This seems like a satisfactory explanation, and so you continue on.

The path terminates abruptly at a door dimly lit by a red light. You grasp the handle, lifting it slowly. It resists for a moment, then slides open with a creak.

Instantly, you're bathed in a deep green light. You shield your eyes as you push through the door, being careful to close it quietly behind you. Your vision stabilizes and you are amazed at what you see. The walls are metal, an absolute rarity, akin to the goblin spires. They are lined with thick pipes through which a strange liquid is being pumped. The liquid glows an eerie green that at once reminds you of the energy emitted from your gun.

"They say a Tohkka built this place." Raz says, still squinting into the light. "I heard they kidnapped a family of them right from Gamora [3.3.000]."

"No way," You say, more to yourself than him.

"Here," Raz says, creeping forward on the walkway towards a small diagram on the wall. "We're above the main pump room, where power is shipped across the city."

He traces a line across the diagram, then stops on an unlabeled room. He continues, "Intel says that this is the generator room, so this'll be where he's held."

You frown at this, examining the diagram. "Mm," You say, pointing at a room labeled GENR, "Looks like this is the generator room, though."

"It's a decoy." He replies, pointing to another room labeled PUR. "See these rooms? They purify the Aether energy and transform it to something more useful to the city." At this, you again look at the green liquid flowing throughout the pipes. "And so that room is the same as those others, because the real generator room is unlabeled."

You nod, taking in the diagram with this new information. It's true, even though the GEN room appears to be larger than the purification chambers, in truth it's just a different shape, and the pathways on the diagram seem to emanate from the unlabeled room as if it has some sort of significance.

Movement on your periphery causes you two to suddenly crouch low. You peer over the walkway into the room below. It's still empty, but through a small window you see royal soldiers rushing past. Raz sucks his teeth.

"I knew things had been going too easily." He says, drawing his blade. You nod and do the same.

"What's the plan?"

Quickly, Raz explains that you'll have to shut down the 4 purification chambers before heading through the control room and into the unlabeled room. Stealth would be preferred, but at this point, either they're already onto you, or something else has the Queen's army on alert.

[Dungeon 3.3]

Episode 3.4

Lafira

"Never thought I'd see it with my own eyes." Kess says, hopping out of the covered wagon and looking around. You, Kess, and Goss creep towards the town square, an elaborate pavilion lit with wavering purple light.

"Too bad we're here as criminals." Goss says as you enter the market district. It's late enough at night that there aren't too many people around, and cloaked strangers don't cause nearly as much suspicion in the city as they do in the country.

"A vacation is a vacation, Gossy." Kess replies. "You gotta learn that if you wanna keep your sanity."

"You're the last person I would peg as sane."

"No arguments there."

You three stop at the base of a massive staircase leading to an amphitheatre. Through small ports ringing the extravagant structure, you can see that some sort of concert or gathering is occurring. You take out a small map, carefully drawn and labeled in a curly handwriting.

"From what she remembers," You say, turning the map so that your companions can get a good look at it, "This is the amphitheatre, and below it is the shipping complex that she saw before being dispatched to the north. Supposedly, below it is a plant that powers the city."

That part of the map is understandably less detailed, with rougher depictions of room sizes and labels. The power complex appears to branch out in a spider-like manner from a room that looks to be unlike the other ones.

"How will we get in, though?" Goss asks, to which you reply, "There are access hatches in most public buildings that lead to the sub level complex below the city. The amphitheatre happens to be the closest to where we are going, so it will likely have direct access."

As casually as you can, you walk up the stone steps towards the amphitheatre doors. Kess and Goss have slunk into the shadows, and are approaching the doors from the either side, where the security at the top of the steps can't see.

"Sir, remove your cloak." One guard says as you mount the top of the stairs. She moves towards you, holding a long spear in one hand, and gesturing for you to stop with the other. As you remove your cloak, the woman coughs.

"Well, I'm sorry ma'am, but the show's not open to--"

"Outsiders?" You say, cutting her off.

"Outlanders." She replies, with some force.

You frown at this, shrugging your shoulders.

"I guess it can't be helped."

"Thank you for your cooperation, have a nice eve--"

The guards words are cut short as a mid-sized boomerang whizzes by, striking the guard in the back of her unprotected head before doing the same to the two other guards standing at the top of the stairs. You three carry the bodies and deposit them into the shadows.

"So far so good." Kess says as you prepare to breach the large doors leading into the interior of the amphitheatre.

As you enter the building, you hear the rush of footsteps from outside. It appears that some soldiers on patrol saw you take out the amphitheatre security. Quickly, you move through the ornate hall that leads to the auditorium. Locating a small, heavy door, you bash through it, sending splinters scattering into the cramped service hallway. You can hear footsteps fast approaching, so you hurry, looking in the dim light for any door that might lead into the complex below.

At last, you find one that was--strangely enough--propped open a bit. Ignoring the convenience of it all, you head through it and end up on a narrow walkway above a shipping yard. Without thinking, you all jump down, landing heavily on some boxes below. The workers there--all human--scratch their heads at the sight.

Above, you can hear the soldiers shouting at you from the catwalk.

"Think they'll jump?" Kess says, catching his breath.

"Let's not stay to find out." You reply, and you continue on, sprinting deeper into the complex, trying to lose the soldiers on your tail. At this point, all of the soldiers in the area have likely been alerted, and so you have to act fast if you want to locate your brother before any real danger shows up.

Episode 3.4

Lafira--Underground Power Plant

After making your way through the complex, shutting down the purification chambers and clearing the control room, you and Raz finally stand at the door to the unmarked room.

"Something's not right." Raz says, looking up at the massive door. It's made out of the same kind of metal as the walls of the power plant. You turn to him, raising an eyebrow.

"Think about it," He continues, "all of the guards we fought never seemed to be looking for us. We found them."

You nod slowly, wondering where he is going with that point.

"And when we entered, we didn't set off any alarms." He says, "At least, none that we were aware of."

"So you think someone else is here." You say, catching onto Raz's point. "Someone who's actions would cause the soldiers to scramble about, looking for them."

He nods affirmation.

You continue, "So, who do you think it is?" To this, he shrugs.

"We might find out soon."

As you suspected, the unmarked room is anything but empty. For one, it's easily four times the size of even the largest room, and at the center is a massive well, that appears to go down some immeasurable distance. The room is dazzlingly lit by the green fluid coursing through pipes extending from a large, tubular container that hangs over the well. The walls, even the floor, are constructed out of Tohkka metal, which you guess acts as an insulator to the strong psycho-magic emanating from the tube. Earlier in the complex, this was harder to tell, but standing in the room, you can physically feel energy moving rhythmically about.

"This has to be the dreamweaver." You say, walking towards the tube. It's suspended over the well, but a broad pathway leads from the entrance and control area to just in front of it. The liquid inside is very similar to the stuff that had been being pumped throughout the complex, but it is significantly cloudier. You stare into it, and you can just barely make out the form of a young goblin, likely somewhere around your age.

You turn to Raz, who is examining the panels on the other side of the room. "See any way to release him?" You ask.

"Looking now." He replies, then, after a moment. "We might have an issue."

"What is it?"

"So the purification chambers went down, so power to the city should go down soon too, once they're out of reserves."

"And?"

"But the Dreamweaver is still pumping out psycho-magic." Almost on cue, an alarm begins blaring. On one of the analog dials atop the Dreamweaver's tube, you can see the levels begin to peak into a red zone. Raz continues, "They have him in some kind of coma that allows his psycho-magic to freely flow, and if we don't wake him up..."

"Another big wave." You say, almost at a whisper. The last wave of psycho-magic disrupted the aether magic sphere and weakened the goblin people significantly, so an ever bigger one would be devastating in ways you could only imagine.

You both come to the understanding that time truly is of the essence. You must release the Dreamweaver [3.4.00] and wake him before it's too late. Just then, the door to the room you are in opens. You and Raz wheel around, expecting to see more soldiers. Instead, standing in the doorway, is the strangest combination of people you have ever seen. There's a goblin with deep purple skin and a circular sheild on his back, a human, pale skinned with her hair done in traditional citadel fashion, and a Tohkka, one of the rarest races to ever find in the land. You are absolutely speechless, but the alarm, which has been slowly rising in volume, snaps you out of it.

Amidst the alarm blaring, both parties seem to be unsure of what to do. Are they enemies? Friends? Everyone is thinking, and so it is the Tohkka who acts first, rushing over to the control panel. Her hands deftly operate the stiff wooden controls, pulling switches and flipping toggles. After a moment, the alarm abruptly stops, and the fluid in the tube begins to drain into the well below. Without speaking, You, Raz, and the other two pull the young goblin from the tube as a port on one side of it opens above the pathway.

"Who the hell is this," The human woman says, staring down at the Dreamweaver, still covered in fluids. Raz takes off his cloak, wrapping the goblin in it.

"My brother," he says, "and if we want to live to ask any more questions, we have to wake him up."

This proves to be more difficult than any one of you could imagine. Although it isn't apparent at first, outside the tube the Dreamweavers psycho-magic aura can be felt at full force. The feeling is unlike anything you all had ever experienced. It rocks you, clouding your mind and sending you all to your knees. With desperation, you attempt to wake the goblin, shaking him and calling out to him, but nothing seems to be working. Even without the alarm blaring, you can feel the magic pressure building in the room. The air begins to crackle and the heavy pipes that crisscross the room start swelling and cracking.

You are flat on your stomach, trying to lift yourself off of the ground under the immense pressure. Painstakingly, you turn your head to Raz, who miraculously still has enough strength to shake the young goblin. Faintly, you hear Raz mutter something as you begin to pass out.

Episode 3.5

Lafira--Underground Lab

The desperation is getting to you. You have been combing the underground complex for what feels like hours, but you haven't seen even the faintest clue of where Afi could be being held. Tentatively, Goss grabs your arm to slow you down.

"Pusha, the others have surely made it to the generator room by now," He says, attempting to sound comforting. "We should meet up with them."

He's right, Miralo, Pokey, and Remi should have searched the other half of the complex and should be waiting in the generator room by now. It's the only room in the power plant that Pokey noted as important, so it's your last hope for clues to your brother. Still, you had been praying that you might find him well before then. With all that has happened tonight and the constant stream of soldiers you have been running from, it feels like your brother is slipping further and further from reach. Still, you continue on.

What's strange to you, is that you never pegged any of the other group's members--Miralo, perhaps--as a fighter. Yet, all of the soldiers that you expected to encounter on the way to the control room seem to have been soundly defeated. Even stranger, many of them have scorched clothing, as if they were hit with a powerful blast of energy of some kind.

Arriving at the control room, you all head to the pair of large doors that leads to the generator room. It doesn't appear to have a lock, yet you can't seem to pull it open. You wonder if it is jammed, but on closer inspection, you notice that the door is indeed moving--even just a bit--but there seems to be something pulling the door closed, like a rubber band. With all of your strength, you jerk the door towards you, and it opens just briefly, long enough for you to be hit with a wave of energy unlike anything you've ever felt. You stare wide eyed at your companions. Even Kess, who has a snarky comment for everything, is speechless. Picking yourself up, you decide to try something different.

You step back from the door a few feet, and crouch into a low stance. You ready your fist, prepared to destroy it to get the door open. You feel the familiar sensation of your own energy building in your hand, then you begin to feel a different sort of energy on top of that. It feels hot, like a cloud of steam that wraps around your arm and fills you with an incredible power. Suddenly, you are no longer afraid of hurting yourself, but hurting others as you are sure you now have the strength to level a building.

When it feels like you can contain no more energy, you leap forward, slamming your fist into the heavy door with a CRACK!

The ground shudders as the door lifts off of its hinges and caves inward, shattering into long strips of wood. You (Pusha) look at your hand, amazed that it's still there. Your hand throbs, and you can clearly see a green energy drifting off of you from your fingers to your shoulder. As the smoke from the impact clears, you and your party climb through the door. Inside, a young goblin is sitting on the floor. He looks at you, dazed. You begin to realize that around the goblin are other people. In fact, they are people you know. Pokey, Miralo, Remi, and... Slant!?

Your heart skips a beat as your friend groggily sits up.

"Raz," She says, "what was--" You scoop her up in your arms and give her a huge hug. For a moment, she doesn't seem to recognize you. And then she says,

"What the hell happened to your eye?"

Episode 3.3

Lafira--Power Plant

Your reunion is cut short as you begin to hear the rush of footsteps indicating that more soldiers have arrived.

"How long has it been?" You ask Raz.

"Has to have been 40 by now."

"Where's our backup then."

"Cutoff maybe?"

You nod, "Then we'll have to think quick."

Your combined parties quickly formulate a plan. The concert above is scheduled to let out in 15 minutes or so, based on how you and Raz timed your entry. The rest of your allies are likely somewhere in the complex still, perhaps in danger. You'll need to fight your way back up through the complex and rejoin them, then make your escape using the crowd as it emerges from the show.

[Dungeon 3.3]

<<Post dungeon text: You all make it back through the service entrance just as the venue doors open and people begin to stream out. In the ruckus, you steal some coats from a nearby rack and pass into the throng of people unnoticed. As the people disperse into the night, you can see soldiers rushing into the building, weapons ready. It seems you were successful.

Once you are far enough away from the town square, you all board wagons and set off for the plains.>>

Episode 3.4A

Centaurian Plains

You two stand on a platform overlooking the centaurian plains. Around it, goblins of every shape and size have gathered. In front of you, the goblin queen stands at a podium, addressing them. To each side of you are the allies that have helped you make it this far. Yet, there's still someone missing.

The queen finishes her speech and the goblins cheer. With your help, she has recovered from her wartime wounds, and her army is growing by the day. It's now spring, and the realities of war have set in for Apothis. The lords, with the Wilds war torn and unstable, have begun aggressively moving north, occupying significant areas in the outlands. The citadel, without it's main source of power, has been crippled, but it is poised to strike at the weakened lords with some new weapon they have been developing. Your faction has been steadily growing and now presents a significant enough threat for the lords and queen Rappala to take notice. As such, leaders from the three armies will meet in the citadel to discuss peaceful terms in the coming days.

To prepare, you two have been training those who wish to fight in physical and magic-based combat. Even the goblin queen's son himself is showing promise with his absolute mastery over psychomagic.

On this particular day, the queen has been speaking with her people, preparing them for the potential war. Her recovery has been nothing short of a miracle, and she now stands as powerful as ever.

After the rally, Raz comes to retrieve you both. You are heading down to meet with some new recruits from the south. The horse ride is short, but it feels good to be moving after spending so long inside during the winter.

You all dismount at Lisse [3.4.XXXX], a tiny outpost town at the edge of the centaurian planes. You find the new recruits sitting and talking inside a small bar. when you enter, they get up to greet you. In addition to a slew of goblins from the wilds and a few giants from the southern outlands, there are some familiar faces. Ludoc is standing there, chortling and waving to you, as his sons, Patch and Keel, sheepishly greet you.

"Hey guys," You say, "How have things been?"

"Gaht dang terrible!" Ludoc replies, wringing his hat with his hands, but still smiling ear to ear. "Varmints overrun my inn! Dang goblins--uh." He catches himself, offering an apology to raz, who politely shrugs it off.

"After you two left, we helped get Lament back on its feet," Keel says, pausing to sip a coffee, "But war broke out so soon afterward it didn't matter."

"Holed up in the inn," Patch adds, "things got real bad in the winter."

You both nod. You can imagine how hard it was to survive in the southern outlands with the lords and humans actively fighting over it.

"Good thing we had this big feller," Ludoc says, drawing your attention for the first time to a particularly massive goblin, attempting to drink tea and remain unnoticed.

You two stare at him.

"Uh, do we know him?" You ask, scratching your head.

"He looks familiar, though." You say.

The goblin chuckles nervously. "It's uh, me. You know, rawr?" He holds his arms up and makes a fearsome face.

"Wait."

"No freaking way."

"MAZURA!?" you both say at the same time. He nods, smiling sheepishly. When he's not rampaging or hyped off of black gem powder, he almost looks like a completely different person. Apparently, after the events in Lament, Patch and Keel took him back to Kaht, where Ludoc was able to save his life. Although it seems it was a close call, and it was good that he ran out of the powder when he did, as it would have surely killed him. Being allied with a former enemy is a bit unsettling for you two, but you suppose that any help at all will be useful.

Back at the spire, the goblin queen comes out to meet you. Upon seeing her, Mazura dives out of your cart, picking his mother up and hugging her with abandon. The sight is touching, and if you weren't about to go to war, it might even be considered a happy ending.

Episode 3.4B

Magrath

*It's the day of the summit, and you and your allies sit in a tent outside of the neutral town of **Magrath**. The town is fairly close to the citadel, but far enough that you have no fear of sudden attack. Soon, the queen and her elite guard will ride out to the citadel for the summit. The rest of her army will follow behind, prepared to act at her signal, which she will send to her son via telepathy. Before the, however, you are debriefing.*

The queen begins speaking, first thanking everyone for aiding her people's efforts. Among those in attendance are you two, the hero Raz, the Dreamweaver Seo, the lord Mazura, as well as former Goblinworxx lieutenant Merak. She continues on to explain the plan for today. Raz and Merak will accompany her as her elite guard, while, Mazura and Pusha will act as generals and lead the main forces. You will head the newly reformed Goblinworxx, with specialists Seo and Pokey under your command. Should things go smoothly, the goblin queen's forces will await her signal outside of the citadel, after which they will pull back to Magrath for a full retreat once things have been officially settled. If a battle breaks out or negotiations do not go as planned, however, Raz and Merak will focus on getting the goblin queen out safely while you and Mazura lead the army into battle. Your division will control intel, and use your specialized skill sets to levy an advantage over the enemy.

She stresses to you all the possibility that what happens today could completely change the fates of all of the people in the land, so you must be prepared.

"Another thing," she adds, her voice grave. "We have word that Rappala's forces have a devastating new weapon that they plan to levy against us."

Everyone in the room nods confirmation.

"Word is," Merak says, suddenly looking at you, "it's another high power psycho-magic user."

This makes your heart sink.

"I didn't want to tell you like this," He continues, "But time is short, and we need to all be prepared."

"So what you're saying is," You start, "I may have to kill my brother if we want to win."

Everyone is silent for a moment.

"We won't make you kill your brother," The goblin queen finally says, "I think if we can subdue him, that'll be enough."

"That's not all, though." Merak adds, "It seems that their study of your brother led to them being able to harness aether magic--specifically psycho-magic--in a better capacity than before." He takes a scrap of paper out of his pocket and shows it to the group.

"Here's a sketch that Pokey says she drew that we found in the ruins of a nearby town. Apparently it details a kind of augmented knight that uses psycho magic in some fashion."

"If that's the case," the goblin queen says, "then must avoid war at all costs."

Episode 3.4C

Outside Lafira

You two are sitting in a hastily constructed tent outside Lafira, anxiously awaiting word from the queen. It has been a few hours since she rode into Lafira with Raz and Merak at her sides.

"Surely," You say, "the negotiations should be over by now," but Seo just looks up at you and shakes his head, a slight frown crossing his face. You are pacing back and forth across the tent, look of frustration on your face as clear as day.

"We should just start moving, you know?" You say, still circling the room. "What if they're in serious danger and can't contact us?"

You think about this for a moment, then say, "I think, even in the worst situation, she would still be able to send some sort of message to Seo, no matter how small." You look to him for confirmation, and he nods.

"Pusha's right, though." Mazura says, stooping to enter the tent. "If things go south, we're at least a thirty minute ride out by the fastest horses we have." This thought in particular sends a chill down everyone's spines. If something goes wrong, you won't be able to respond immediately.

Suddenly, Seo's ears perk up. He looks around the tent, then stands up.

"Any word from the queen?"

He furrows his brow, then says, "No, something else." You all wait as he appears to be processing some sort of mental stimuli. "I think...no, I know. The other army is on the move."

"Without any word from the queen?"

"Yes, it looks like they'll engage from the southeast."

Without another word, Mazura rushes out of the tent, producing a horn from a pouch at his side. Before long, the thundering sound of the goblin war horn fills the air. You hear the army being roused around you. Camps breaking, soldiers lining up, ready to move. You all take positions on the battlefield, you and Mazura leading a slow approach as you begin to see the enemy beyond the next hill.

As the opposing forces close in, you all stare in dismay at the army fast approaching. They are many, goblin and human alike, flying both the human queen and goblin lord's flags.

"Tell the queen," You say to Seo, "ask her what we should do."

"This was not apart of the plan." Mazura says, looking out over the field that will soon become a battleground. He tosses you a telescope. Your eyes are not deceiving you, what was a fairly balanced three-way conflict has quickly become a struggle vastly in the enemy's favor. You scan their forces. Among the standard array of goblins, high goblins, human soldiers, and so on, are a kind of enemy you've never seen before. Clad in ornate cloaks, you can clearly see arcane energy emanating from their bodies as they ride towards you.

You report what you saw to the rest of the forces.

"So it's even worse than we thought." You say, readying your weapon.

"Yeah."

Kess, Goss, and Remi ride up to you.

"Any word from the queen?" Remi asks.

"None yet."

"We're fucked to high hell then, huh." Kess says.

"What will you do?" Goss asks you two, and for the first time you realize the influence you have. You can determine how this battle goes. You've made it this far, and your actions can carry you further.

Pulling in close with Mazura, you all quickly devise a plan. Your forces will reform into an arrow shape, with you all at the front. Using you and Mazura's combined strength, you all will attempt to tear through the enemy and create a big enough space for a small group of you to break through and offer support to the queen. Meanwhile, you will focus on defeating the stronger of the enemy's soldiers, after which you are sure your soldiers will be able to win the battle. Scanning through their frontline, you don't see the likes of Rumble or Afi, so you bet that they are in the citadel with the human queen.

You break, ready to execute the plan. Its now or never, the battle begins.

[Dungeon 3.4]

*Episode 3.6**Outside Lafira*

After defeating the aether knights, you two break away from the battle, riding wildly towards the citadel.

"Wait up!" Seo calls, rushing to catch up with you. "Mother just contacted me."

The queen's message confirms your fears, the entire thing was a setup. From the moment they entered the citadel, they were surrounded by armed soldiers, and the "negotiations" were only a front to buy time while the enemy's forces prepared an attack. They are currently in a standoff, and aren't sure how much longer they can hold out.

You ride into Lafira, boldly dashing past the guards at the gate and onto the main road. Galloping at full tilt, you navigate the maze-like city, heading towards the royal pavilion. You are swift, but the queen's forces are steadily mounting behind you.

Ahead of you, the royal pavilion stretches out ahead of you. It is a medium sized complex with fantastical art and architecture that culminates in the queen's home. Unlike other cities, the pavilion is a sort of fortress within a fortress, so the queen's abode is arrogantly accessible. This proves to be an advantage for you, however, as you blow open the gate and ride into the royal pavilion. The horses slide and stumble, running at such high speeds on the smooth stone, so you dismount, prepared to storm the queen's home. Before then, however, you must fight your way through her guards.

[Dungeon 3.6]

Episode 3.7

Lafira--Royal Pavilion--Queen Rappala's Mansion

The door to the grand hall where the summit is being held flies off its hinges as you all barge in. The room is massive, with a long glass table running straight down the middle. On the far end, the table's chairs have been tossed aside and part of the glass cracked. The sound of blades clashing fills the room as a tense battle takes place between your comrades and the allied goblin lord and human queen. You rush to the goblin queen's aid, taking your places at her side. The queen is sweating with exertion, her brow furrowed as she uses her psycho-magic to defend against the enemy's attacks. Raz and Merak, too, are just about at their limits, their defenses crumbling and sword strikes slow and clumsy.

The enemy's side seems almost painfully unfazed by the battle. Queen Rappala, in resplendent battle attire stands with her arms folded as she watches your side struggle. The goblin lord is far in the back, taking potshots with her gun, a very similar, but decidedly more precise weapon to your own. At the front are Rumble and Afi, clad in royal armor and quickly making short work of Raz and Merak. With their mix of intricate swordplay and devastating psycho-magic attacks, you aren't sure how long the queen and her knights will hold on.

"Afi!" You call, bewildered at the sight of him. He stands taller than you last saw him, and significantly more toned, but you know your brother anywhere. He turns to you, an indescribable look on his face, before abruptly returning to his onslaught against the goblin queen.

"It's no use." She says, barely fending off a wave of deep purple energy flung her way. "He's no more than a puppet, his power completely under the queen's control."

At this, queen Rappala laughs in her deep, booming voice. She snaps a finger and Rumble and Afi suddenly cease their attacks, taking their place in front of her.

"How nice of you to join us," she says, "although I don't recall inviting an envoy and a..." She looks you up and down. "hick, to this meeting."

Her eyes narrow, burning crimson behind her thick eyeliner.

"So excuse me if we aren't as hospitable as you'd like."

Her taunts send waves of rage through you and you leap at her, prepared to smash her into dust right that moment. As you approach, she watches you with almost a bored expression, but then as aether energy begins to warp the air as it collects in your fist, she takes a step back, her expression wavering. You are inches from blowing her away, but at the last moment, your brother steps in front of you, prepared to take the blow head on. You pull the punch, aiming it away from your brother and sending a shockwave of energy through the room that blows a massive hole in the wall of the house.

Queen Rappala stares out of the hole, whistling low. "Gonna take at least a week for those poor goblins to fix that hole you just made." Her confidence restored, she pushes past her guards, jabbing a long fingernail into your chest. "Maybe it'll go faster if I make them work through the nights. What do you think?"

"Enough games," You say, leveling your gun at her, "lets see if you're still smiling after I send you through that hole myself."

A devilish smirk crosses her face as you say this, and she backs up.

"Well, look who's got a spine now." She says, holding out one hand. "I like it."

A moment later a flash of silver zips through the room, and Queen Rappala catches it in her hand. It vibrates violently for a moment, then resolves into the form of a massive hammer, easily as tall as her and quite heavy. She swings the hammer around with ease,

"Well, none of us are getting any younger."

<<Final battle>>

*Episode 3.8**Lafira--Royal Pavilion--Queen Rappala's Mansion*

The fight against Queen Rappala and the goblin lord takes your party beyond its limit, but you prevail, whittling their strength down until they can no longer fight. You stand in a circle, weapons raised at your adversaries, who have dropped their weapons and now stand at your mercy. They stare at you defiantly, awaiting their fate.

The goblin queen steps forward, "It seems our negotiations have finished," She says with a tinge of sarcasm.

"Indeed", Queen Rappala replies through bloody teeth.

"Then I think we'll be on our way," She continues, "After all, I've got a kingdom to rebuild, and people to feed."

"What do you want from me." Rappala says, struggling at her binds. "Spit it out."

"What I want? You cannot give me."

Rappala's eyes narrow as the goblin queen continues.

"You've taken our freedom, our land, our autonomy, and now, even our people themselves." She says, shooting a glance at her daughter, "and after your war, you have little to give. So I'll take what's mine. My people, my children, my land, and you can have what's left."

...

On the ride back to the centaurian planes, you two look back at the citadel, shrinking slowly in the distance. The sun is beginning to set, and you bones feel heavy and weak. You lie back in the goblin queen's cart, feeling the plush material around you. Across from you, Afi and the goblin lord are tied up, knocked out. When they wake, you'll begin the long road of repairing the families broken by this war, but for now, and for the first time in a long time, you sleep and you dream.

Appendix C- Card Databases

Assist Cards

Name	Ref Number	Effect	Mode	Cost
Patch I		Intimidate: Stuns one enemy for 1d4 turns.	Active	x
Patch II		Uppercut: Deals 2d8 damage.	Active	x
Patch III		All defensive actions buffed by 1.	Passive	x
Keel I		Blade Storm: 3d4A Damage	Active	x
Keel II		Parry: Blocks one attack for the user, if the damage would have been more than your DEF, the attacking enemy is stunned for 1 turn.	Active	x
Keel III		Saving throws buffed by +1	Passive	x
Raz I	1.3.008	Cyclone Blade: 3D8+2	Active	x
Raz II	1.3.009	Warcry: +1 die for attack rolls (party) for 3 turns	Active	x
Raz III		Hyper Slash: 3d8 Damage to target, stuns them if they aren't killed.	Active	x
Raz IV		Counter-Strike: Blocks one incoming attack, dealing that damage +2 to the enemy.	Active	x
Raz V		Blade Dance: 3d6A Damage	Active	x
Raz VI		Goblin Savior: All damage-dealing actions buffed by 6	Passive	200G
Merak I		Cold Steel: All blade based attacks are considered ice elemental damage. DEF against ice attacks buffed by 4.	Passive	x
Merak II		Ice Bolt: 3d4 dmg, freezes non fire-elemental enemies for 2 turns	Active	x
Seo I		Reality Bend: Can restart the battle, keeping your hand.	Active	60G
Seo II		Mind Boost: Boosts aether abilities for 1d4 turns	Active	x
Mu-no I		Null Zone: Nulls all incoming damage for 1d4 turns, during which time standard actions cannot be performed.	Active	x
Mu-no II		Illusory Strike: 1d4(2d8) dmg	Active	x
Mu-no III		Mind Warp: 1d6 dmg for every aether skill in your hand	Active	50G
Mu-no IV		Calamity Drive: Deals 6d8E damage, calculated individually	Active	200G
Kess I		Lucky shot: Roll a D20, if it gets 18 or above, deal 20 dmg.	Active	x
Kess II		Slingshot barrage: Shoots a shit ton of rocks at once, dealing 4d4 dmg.	Active	x
Goss I		Boomerang shot: 2d8A damage	Active	x
Goss II		Clear mind: Deflects one psycho-magic attack up to three times per battle	Passive	x
Remi I		Grand Fireball: Fire elemental attack that deals 2d8 dmg and inflicts 1d6 burn damage for next 3 turns.	Active	x

Remi II		Heatwave: Buffs fire elemental attacks by 4	Passive	30G
Miralo I		Poison Dagger: 2d8 dmg + 1d4 dmg applied for the next three turns	Active	x
Resistance I	BP	Cannon shot: 4d6 dmg	Active	x
Resistance II	BP	Resupply: Allows you to return your hand to your deck and shuffle it, drawing the same number of cards.	Active	x
Resistance III	BP	Arrow Rain: 2d6A	Active	x
Resistance IV	BP	Call for Backup: User may search deck to add one assist card of choice to their hand. Shuffle deck afterwards.	Active	x
Mazura I		Mind Chop: 2d8A + stun for 1 turn	Active	x
Mazura II		Megaton Slash: 4d8+8 dmg	Active	x
Wanderer I		Bite: 3d8 dmg	Active	x
Wanderer II		Mysterious Calling: Discard your hand and draw the same amount of cards.	Active	x

Masteries

Name	Char	Type	Requirement	Effect/Stats
Precision Mastery	SL	Trait	Defeat 30 stunned or asleep enemies using precision or assassin shot.	Momentum: Successful precision kills allow you to take another full turn.
Grapple Mastery	PA	Trait	Defeat 30 enemies using grapple-based moves.	Can grapple two enemies at once, applying card-based damage to both enemies.
Tactics Mastery	ALL	Trait	Win 20 battles in the first turn.	Lookahead: when drawing, you can leave the top card of your deck face up.
Assist Mastery	ALL	Trait	Defeat 30 enemies using assist card attacks.	Assist card capacity increased from 3 to 5
Magic Mastery	SL	Skill	Complete a dungeon with a deck consisting of all 6 elements.	Omni Beam: 3d6A + 1d4 for every elemental card in your hand.
Grapple Mastery II	PA	Skill	Win 20 solo battles while only using grapple attacks.	Viper Grip: All further grapples automatically deal 2d8, non stacking, damage per turn.
Defense Mastery	ALL	Skill	Win 30 battles without taking damage.	Perfect Defense: Null all incoming damage for one turn.
Aether Mastery	SL	Skill	Defeat 40 enemies using Aether skills	Clutch(A): Search your deck for a specific Aether card and then shuffle it. You may use the card that turn or place it on the top of your deck.
Tank Mastery	PA	Skill	Successfully defend your partner from 20 guard breaks.	For 1d6 turns, defensive abilities are boosted by 4.

Monsters and Enemies

Name	Ref Number	Abbreviation	DMOD	DEF	Trait
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Goblin	X	GB	3D4+2	8	x
Cursed Goblin	X	CG	3D4	4	x
High Goblin	X	HG	3D6	10	x
Kobold	X	KB	2D6+2	10	x
Waspa	X	WA	X	X	x
Mantis	X	MA	X	X	x
Forest Siren	X	FS	X	X	x
Goblin Knight	X	GK	3D6+4	14	x
Wraith	X	WR	2D4+1D6	16	x
Grave Goblin	X	GG	3D8	16	x
Goblin Caster	X	GCA	2D4+6	10	Provides +2 Def to all Party Members
Brood Mother	X	BM	X	X	x
Orcblin	X	OB	3D10	18	x
Goblin General	X	GGE	3D8	18	4 DEF Shield
Wizzra	X	WIZ	3D4	14	x
Desert Stalker	X	DS	2D8	16	x
Goblin Shaman	X	GS	3D4+2	12	x
Goblin Soldier	X	GSO	3D6	14	ATK Buffed by 1 for every other "Goblin Soldier" in their party.
Goblin Charmer	X	GCH	3D4	14	Attacks deal +1D6 poison damage
Aether Knight	X	AK	4D10	24	Immune to mental attacks and 4 DEF Shield
EX High Goblin	X	EHG	4D8	20	x
Grave Kobold	X	GKB	4D8	16	1D4 physical damage resist
Nightwatch	X	NW	2D8	14	
Security	X	SE	3D6	12	
Acad. Witch	X	AW	3D8+2	14	Provides +4 Atk to all Party members
Pavilion Guard	X	PG	2D8+6	16	
Heavy Knight	X	HEK	4D4	22	
Human Knight	X	HK	3D6+4	18	2 DEF Shield

Human Soldier	X	HS	3D6	DEF Buffed by 2 for every other "Human Soldier" in their party
Human Caster	X	HC	2D8+6	12 Immune to elemental magic.
Patch		x	3D6+2	Second Wind: EX (double) damage granted to first attack after being revived.
Keel		x	2D8	Advanced Support: Automatically revives an ally instead of attacking during his turn.
Whistler		x	3D4	14 4pt Resist to all magic
Mazura		x	2D8+4	16 8 DEF Shield
Faisir		x	3D6	Attacks over 16 (that dont kill) stun for 1 turn. Can only happen once per turn.
Mati		x	3D6	X
Ratu		x	4D4	X
Warden		x	2D10	16
Rumble		x	3D8	18 6 DEF Shield
Afi		x	2D10	16 Immune to mental and aether attacks.
Rumble II		x	3D8	18 Gains +4 attack for every party member defeated.
Rappala		x	4D8	24 Rolls with 6 in them stun you for 1 turn
Ratu II		x	4D4+4	18 Sniper shot: +8 to stunned enemies

Skill Cards

Name	Char	Effect	Cost
Inspire	PA	Add 1Die to ally	3
Persist	ALL	Hold one card to next hand	0
Warmup	PA	Add 4AP next turn	3
Skull Breaker	PA	4D8 dmg	5
Phantom Slice	ALL	Atk roll is above 6, double the damage. Must be played before ATK	3
Fireshot	SL	1D4 dmg, can combo	3
Fireburst	SL	costs 2 "Fireshot" cards, does 2d6 dmg	X
Thunder call	SL	4D6, sacrifice standard action	7
Conduit	ALL	Sacrifice your STD action to grant ally 1/2 of your AP (rounded down)	X
Overclock	ALL	x2DMOD to ally	7
Ice Barrier	SL	6DEF persistent barrier	4
Mind Charge	SL	Add 5AP next turn	4

Magic Barrier	SL	Halves dmg done to ally for one turn	5
Auto Dodge	All	Automatically dodge the next incoming attack	5
Soul Charge	SL	Add 2AP to ally for their next turn	3
Power Charge	PA	Add 3 to next ATK roll	2
Lunge	PA	3D4 dmg, if it defeats an enemy, you may use the grapple card if it is in your hand	3
Harden	PA	Persistent 1D6 boost to your DEF	2
Aether Charge	SL	Sacrifice STD action to use one AE skill, persistent state until canceled	X
Rave Missile	SL	AE: 2d8 dmg	X
Aether Blade	SL	AE: 3D6 dmg	X
Radiant Discharge	SL	AE: 4D8A, ends AE mode	X
Grapple	PA	Enter grapple state, during which you may use grapple skills. Ineffective against flying	3
Piledriver	PA	GPL: 4D6	X
Sleeper Hold	PA	GPL: puts target to sleep for 3 turns, ends grapple mode	X
Suplex	PA	GPL: 3D8	X

Story Cards

Card Number	Title	Text	Subtitle	Sub Ref(s)
1.1.000	Lafira	The grand city of human realm. A great life awaits anyone who can make it in this magical city.	N/A	
1.1.001	Pusha	You've wondering city to city in search of your brother, Afi. All you have of him is his ring.	N/A	

1.1.002	Slant	You dream of returning to your comfortable life in the capital, but for now you'll settle for uncomfortable sheets.	N/A	
1.1.003	Keel	This ruffian is a staple in Kaht [1.1.6]. Him and his brother seem to be trouble makers.	N/A	
1.1.004	Patch	This ruffian is a staple in Kaht [1.1.6]. Him and his brother seem to be trouble makers.	N/A	
1.1.009	Barkeeper	Ever since the black wave there has only been trouble for us in the Midlands.		
1.1.010	Drunk Patron	Hey you want some black gems? I got som'		
1.1.011	The Giantess	Hey honey, you want an autograph? I'd rather you'd waited until after the show, but I've got time.	Receive	16
1.1.012	Old Soldier	Dirty outlanders, I knew moving out here was a bad idea. They're held up in these caves near my land.	Items	13
1.1.013	Old Map	It seems the old man's goals fall in line with your own.	N/A	

1.1.005	Midlands	These lands are teeming with danger and untapped resources. Many adventurers have made their start here.	N/A	
1.1.006	Kaht Outpost	A tiny outpost on the edge of the Midlands [1.1.005]. The only place of note on this worn down land is Ludoc's Inn [1.1.007]	Shop	Elixir, Strength Potion
1.1.007	Ludoc's Inn	This central gathering spot in Kaht [1.1.006] hosts an array of interesting characters.	Characters	9,10,11,12
1.1.014	Goblins	This shady race is often the start of many issues in the realm and should not be trusted.	N/A	
1.1.008	Insectids	These odd creatures lurk in the dark and should be avoided at all cost.	N/A	
1.2.001	Lament	This once quiet farming town has turned into a somewhat prosperous city in recent years.	N/A	
1.2.002	Mazura	This once feared Goblin Lord has fallen out power and has now been finally defeated.	Weapon	1.2.003

1.2.003	Windbreaker	The famed axe wielded by Goblin Lord Mazura [1.2.002].	Weapon	1.2.003
1.2.004	Death of the Goblin Queen	The grand leader of the goblins, was defeated in her insurrection against the humans.		
1.2.005	The Heart of the Wilds	The last land controlled by goblins is currently being fought over by the remaining goblin lords.		
1.2.006	Mazura's Map	A partial map detailing safe and danger zones in the wilds [1.2.005] on the border of the midlands [1.1.005]		
1.2.008	Satchel	This part of the Whistlers disguise contained your stolen items.	Contains	1.2.013
1.2.013	Afi's ring	The only thing Pusha has left of her lost brother.		
1.2.009	Merchant's Disguise	The Whistler used these tattered rags to evade an entire town.		
1.2.010	Ornate Dagger	This nifty dagger, though short, is deadly in the right hands.	Weapon	1.2.010
1.2.011	Bundle of Keys	This unsorted collection of keys would be a nightmare to use in a pinch.		
1.2.012	Long Shawl	A regular shawl in appearance but it appears to have magical properties.	Defensive Item	1.2.012
1.3.000	Manta	This established city hosts all manners. This has given way to great trade and a dark under belly.		
1.3.001	Arcane Falls	This ancient magic ground is where many goblins gather in the hopes of honing their skills magical or not.		
1.3.002	Shura	One of the few allies Slant has, you're hoping she can show you the way to your next lead.		
1.3.005	Snake Pass	This well traveled road leads from Manta [1.3.000] into lands held by goblins. It passes through many small towns as well making a direct yet dangerous route.		

1.3.006	Xuric	This town is slightly larger than Kaht [1.1.006] with their central industry being agriculture.		
1.3.007	Odd Chest	The only valuable item left in Xuric [1.3.006] but it will not give way to any attempts to unlock it.		
1.3.008	Raz	A respected warrior who served directly at the side of Queen Rappala [1.2.004].	People	1.3.002
1.3.009	Faisir	A goblin lord feared for his swordsmanship and leadership.		
1.3.010	Black Wave	This great in shift global political and magical power resulted in the defeat of goblins and the rise of humans		
1.3.011	Goblin Spires	These towers concentrate goblin power so adept users may draw from them.		
1.3.012	Knomeworxx	Weapons of power created by a lost race that are rare to find		
2.1.000	Grappler's Gloves	Thin gloves made out of a strong material that add extra grip to one's palms and fingers.		
2.1.001	Aether Pistol	A strange pistol manufactured by Knomeworxx. This particular one was stolen from an army in the citadel by Shura [1.3.002]		
2.2.000	Boarsman	A grapple based fighting style developed by hunters in the northern mountains. The people there live among some of the most dangerous animals and often take them on hand-to-hand		
2.2.001	Roguelords	An ancient technique that fluidly combines ranged attacks with deadly swordsmanship. Developed by Goblins in the southern oasis, Shura [1.3.002] was the last known master.		
2.2.003	The Defector	An unknown goblin lord rumored to have betrayed the Queen [1.2.004] and orchestrated her demise.		
2.3.000	Snake's Tail	This offshoot of the Snake's Pass [1.3.005] offer safety by hiding it's traveler but it also hides those with nefarious purposes.		
2.3.001	Tadorin	Raz's [1.3.008] hometown and one of the few fully liberated from Rappala's control. It stands as a testament to the goblin people's former glory		
2.3.002	Merak's Place	A bar in the center of Tadorin [2.3.001] run by Merak, a close friend of Raz [1.3.008].		
2.3.003	United Goblin Front	UGF is the newly established coalition of goblin militia under the remaining two goblin lords. They seek to incite war with the ruling humans, weakening the economy and toppling the government.		
2.5.000	Ossha	A town known to be a popular convergence of the Goblin and Arcanus people's societies. Also known to be an important stronghold in the Goblin-Arcanus alliance, which was hence destroyed in the battle that toppled the Arcanus people and effectively ended the war.		

2.6.000	Aether Hawk	A grand deity of the Arcanus people. It is often depicted as a soaring bird and is closely associated with magic.		
2.7.000	Roht's Blessing		Trait	
2.7.001	Ganryu's Promise		Weapon	
2.7.002	Formua's Strength		Trait	
2.7.003	Viruo's Fortitude		Trait	
2.7.004	Tarok's Curse		Weapon	
2.7.005	Zor's Ring		Trait	
3.2.000	Withrack	This relatively isolated town is close in proximity to Kaht but is quite a distance from the Snake Pass		
3.2.001	Goblinworxx General Roht	A Goblin lord with psycho-magic abilities rivaling in strength to the Goblin Queen.		
3.2.002	Elvesn Domain	Home of a secluded race who only interact with others in the realm when they need to trade.		
3.3.000	Gamora	the capital city of the Tohkka homeland. Very little is known of this mysterious city, but it is rumored to be a technological marvel of unreal proportions. It should be noted that the inspiration for Lafira was supposedly based on an illustration of Gamora found in a traveler's journal.		
3.4.000	Dreamweaver	A Goblin of great magical ability that seems generating large amount of power for the citadel.		
3.4.001	Lisse	One of the few outpost towns in the north, where Queen Rappala's influence holds less sway.		

Traits

Name	Char	Effect A	Effect B	Cost
Soul Charge	SL	One Skill card may be used for free in up to three separate turns each battle.	May buff ally by 1DMOD once per battle.	X
Advanced Guard	PA	May automatically survive one guard break per battle.	May choose to sacrifice ATK move to guard party for 1/2 incoming damage up to three times per battle.	X
Cypher Grip	SL	Allows you to equip two different weapons, granting you an extra ATK move, but halving your AP pool.		X
Ranger Grip	SL	Allows you to designate two weapons that you may sacrifice a standard action to swap between mid-match.		X
Foresight	PA	Allows you to keep the top card on your deck face up.		X

Flow	PA	Bufs your AP by 3 and allows you to keep one card in your hand each turn.		X
Gunslinger	SL	AP is halved, but you may perform two standard actions given that you have a gun or crossbow equipped.		200G
Gamble	ALL	You may re-roll any dice roll, including saving throws, up to three times each battle.		100G
Vampire	ALL	For a standard action, you may attack an enemy for 3d8 dmg, reducing their DEF to the remainder amount.		100G
Elemental	SL	Elemental magic receives a 2d6 buff to all damage.		150G
One Punch	PA	Using any hand-to-hand weapon, you may double the damage of any ATK, provided that you sacrifice the option to use skills for that turn.		150G
Bullseye	PA	DEF buffed by 6, enemies automatically target you. Saving throw cost to revive you reduced to 9.		200G
Lucky	ALL	Up to three times per match, you may roll a D20 when attacking. If the roll is above 14, then the enemy takes +8 extra damage.		150G
Roht's Blessing	ALL	You may null damage done to you for one turn once per battle.		
Zor's Ring	ALL	Battle loot is doubled, but so is the penalty for losing battles.		
Formua's Strength	ALL	All damage dealing actions buffed by 4.		
Viruo's Fortitude	ALL	All defensive actions buffed by 4.		

Weapons

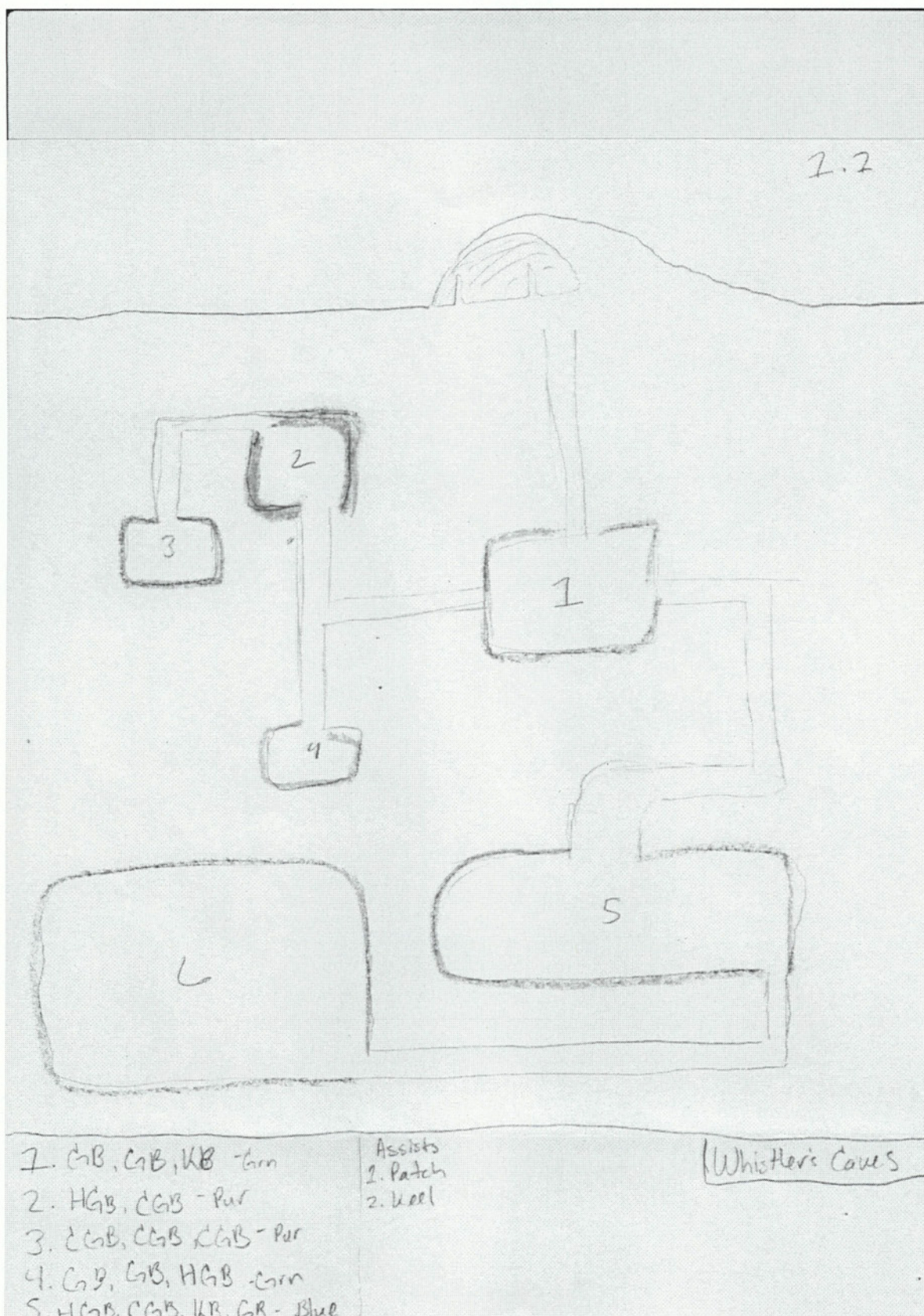
Name	Ref Number	Char	DMOD	Effect	Cost
Wanderer's Bow		SL	2D8+4	boost dmg against flying by 2	x
Aether Pistol		SL	4d8+6flying	Boost ap by 2, +2 flying, +6 stunned	x
Titan Blade		PA	3d8	-4 flying, +2 stunned	x
Boxing Gloves		PA	1D4(2D8)	-6 flying	20G
Grappler's Gloves		PA	2d8+6grapple		x
Ornate Dagger	1.2.010	SL	2d8	boost AP by 4	x
Windbreaker	1.2.003	PA	3d8+4		x
Rapture		SL	6d6+6	Take 1d4 stackable damage per turn	80G

Battle Axe		PA	4d6+2non-flying		30G
Light Crossbow		SL	3d4+4 flying		20G
Heavy Crossbow		SL	3d8+6flying		40G
Cyclone Boomerang		PA	3d8+2	50G	50G
Throwing Knives		SL	1d4(2d8)	20G	50G
Ganryu's Promise		ALL	3d6+10		X
Tarok's Curse		ALL	4d8	Slain enemies cannot be revived by their allies, but neither can the user.	X
Channeler's Staff		SL	1d4	Boosts AP by 6	40G
Champion's Robe		PA	1d8	Boosts AP by 6	40G
Bamboo Staff		SL	2d10+4		30G

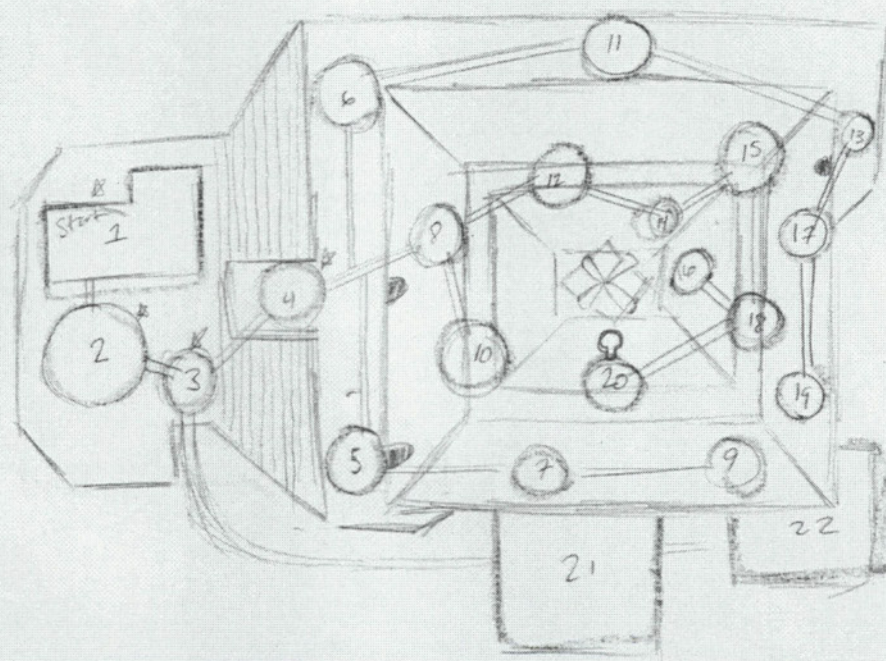
Defensive Items

Name			DEF		
Illusory Shawl	1.2.012	ALL	4	Boost Defensive Maneuvers by 4	X
Buckler	X	SL	6		30G
Tower Shield	X	PA	8		30G
Light Armor	X	ALL	6	Dual Weapon Compatible	40G
Heavy Armor	X	PA	12	Unable to dodge	60G

Appendix D- Dungeon Concepts



2.2



⌘ = must be completed in stealth

1 GB, KB
2 WIZ, GB
3 DS
4 GCA, DS
5 HG, HG
6 DS, DS

7 GCA, WR
8 WIZ, KB, KB
9 WR, WR, WR
10 HG, CG, CG
11 CG, GCA
12 GB, GB, KB

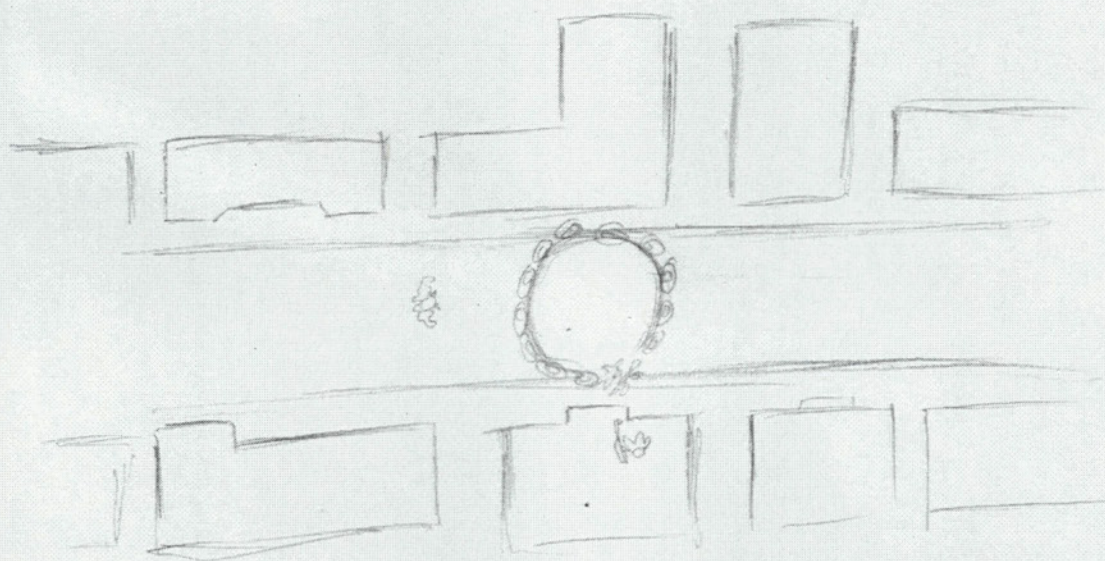
13 HGB, DS, DS
14 GCA, GB, CG
15 DS, GB, KB
16 WR, WR, WR
17 GCA, GB, GS
18 WR, WR, GCH

Scorchland Temple

19 GG, GG, WR
20 WR, WR, DS, DS
21 GG, GCA, KB
22 OB, GCH, GS

Assist
Wanders

2.3



Wave 1 GSO, GSO, GSO

Wave 2 GSO, GSO, GSO

Wave 3 GCH, GSO, GSO

Wave 4 GGE, GSO, GSO

Wave 6 GCR, WIZ, GSO

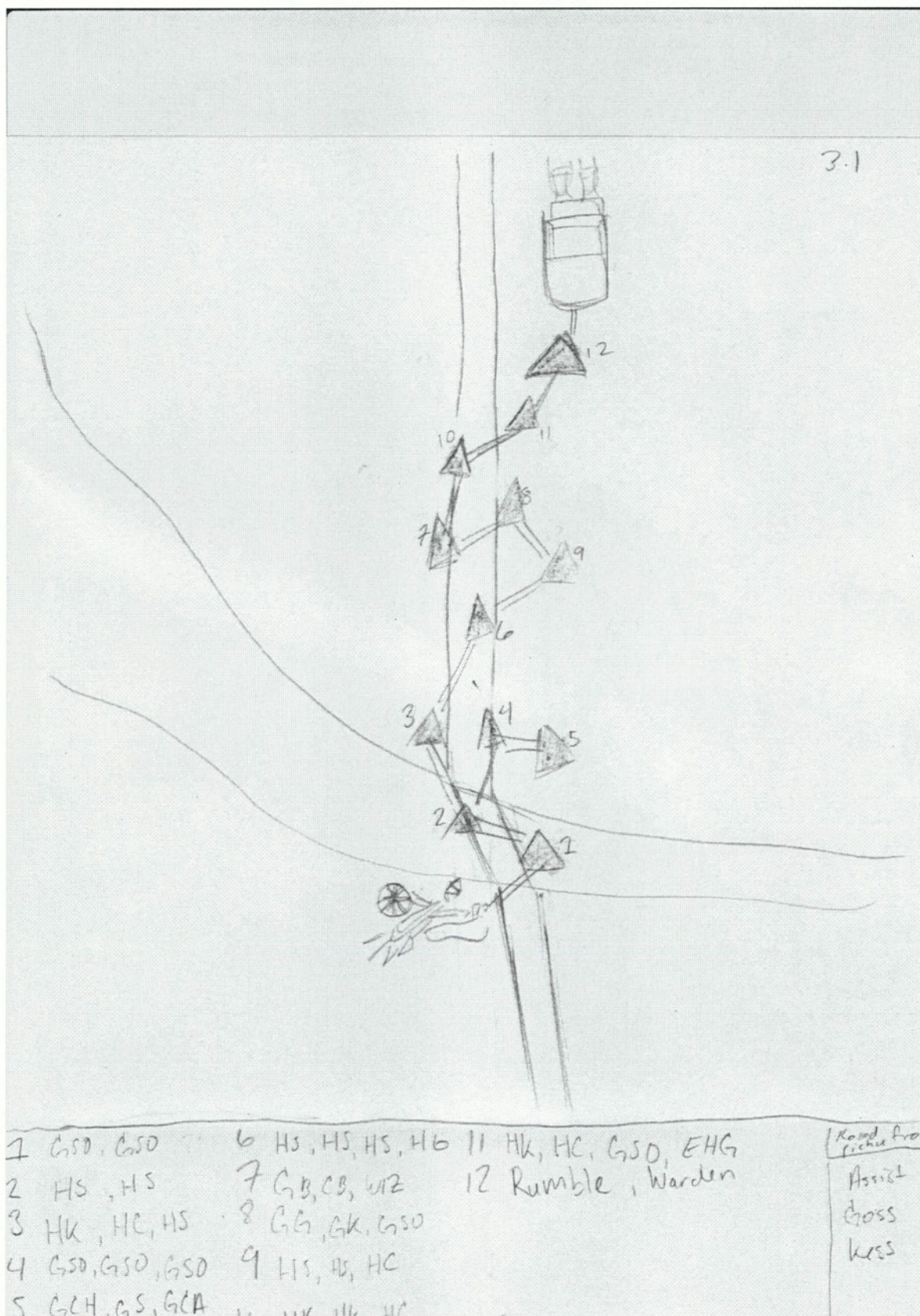
Wave 7 GK, GK, GS, GK

Wave 8 GK, GK, GGE, GSO

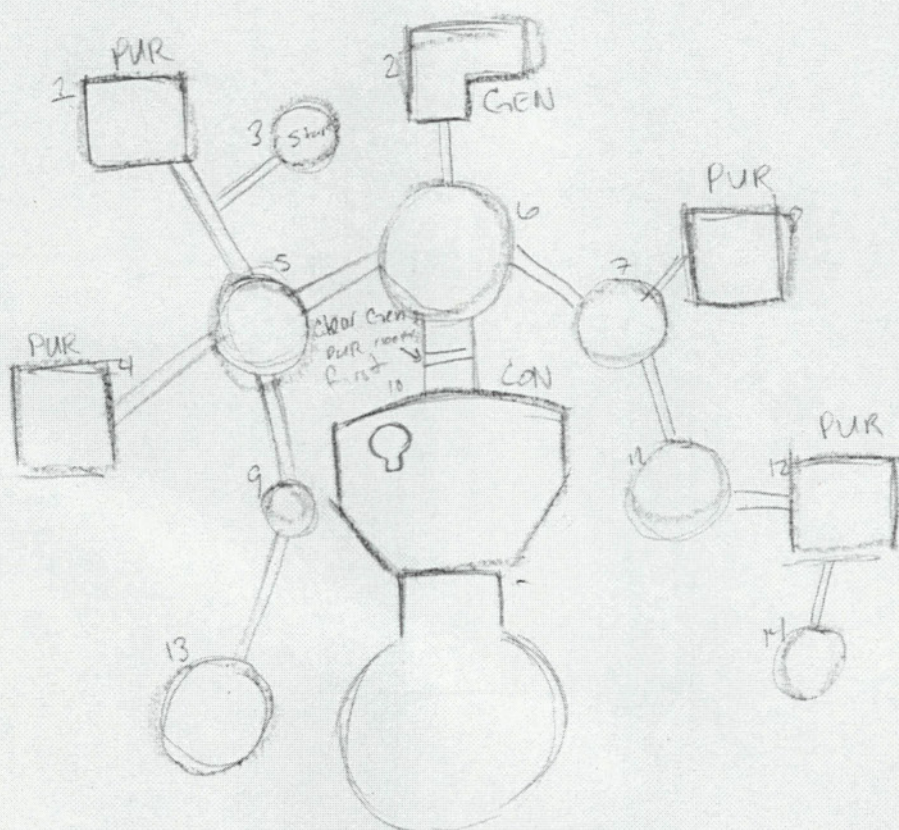
Buss MATI RATU GS, GS

Pichu

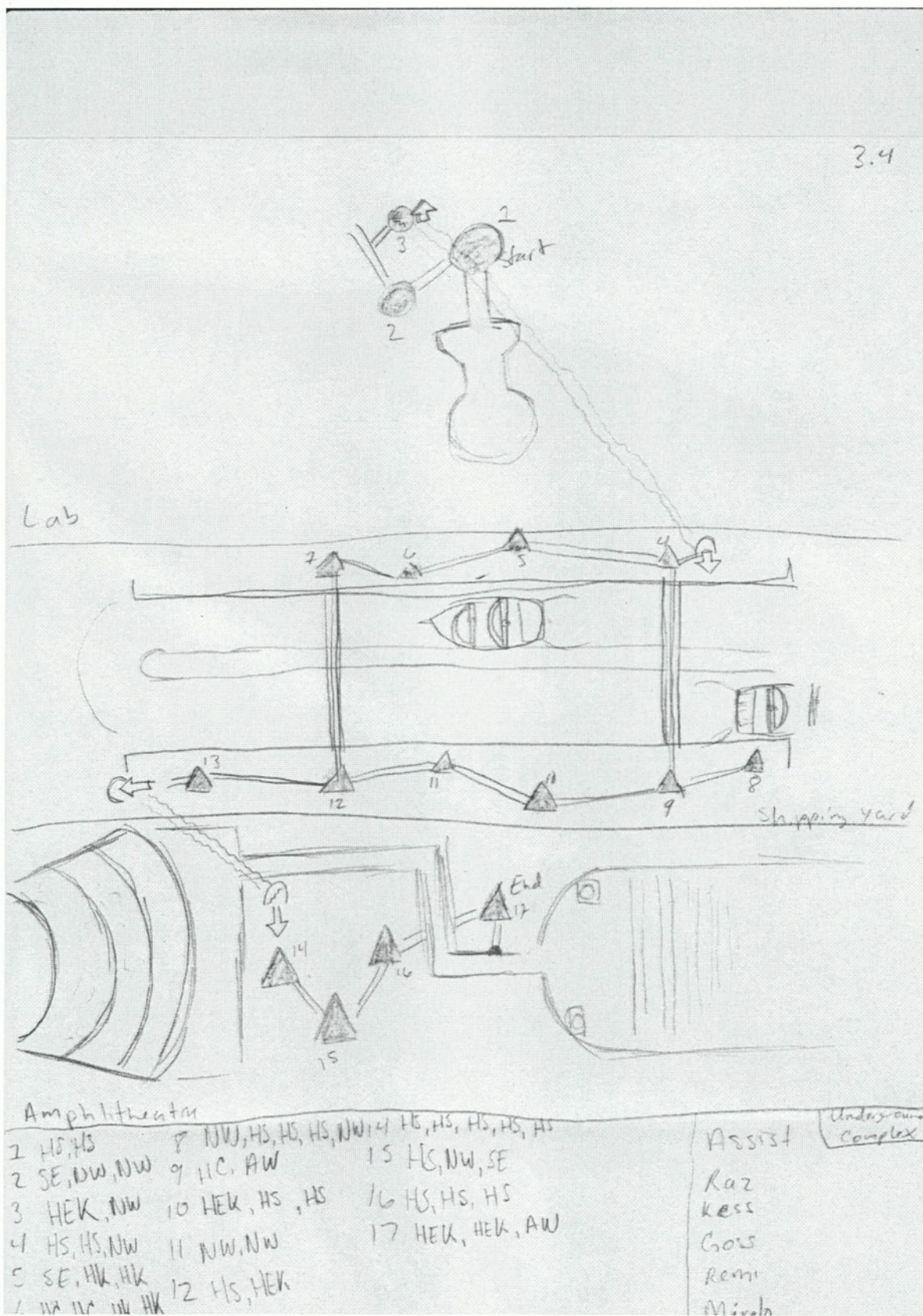
No available
assists

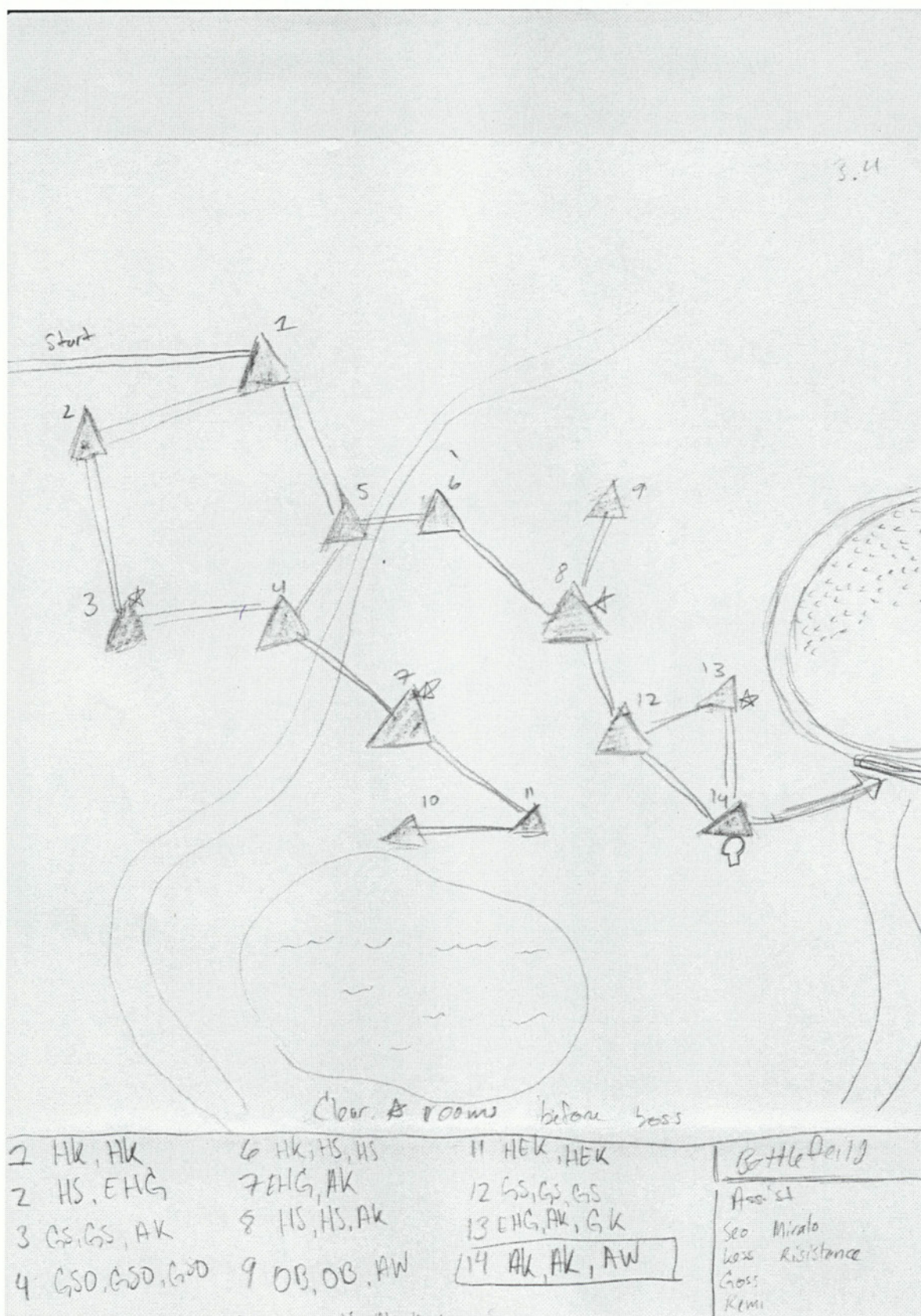


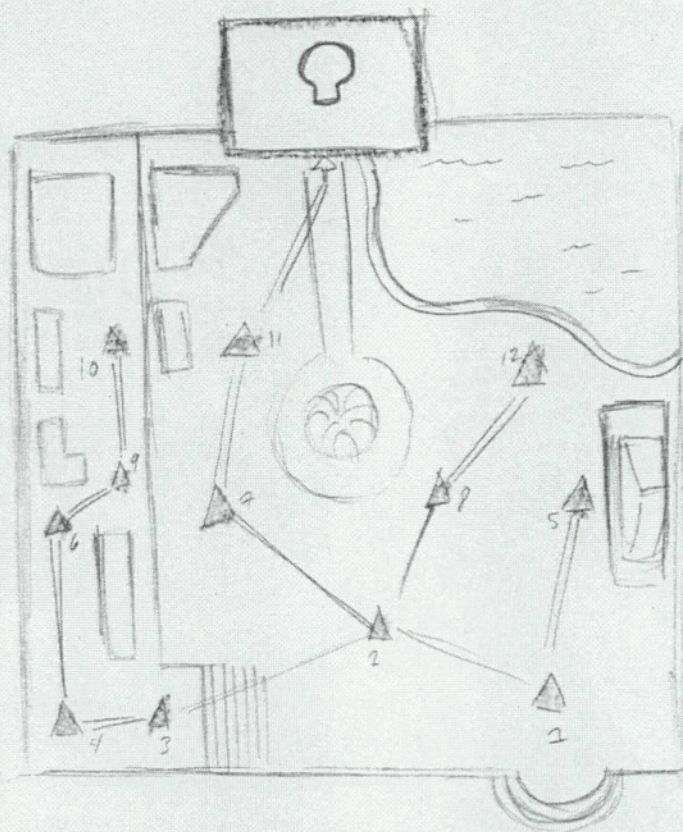
3.3



2 HC, HS, NW	5 HC, HK	9 NW, HS, HS	13 HC, HC, HK, NW	Power plant
2 NW, HS, HS	6 HK, HC	10 HS, HS, HS, HK	14 HS, HS, HS, HS	Assist
3 NW, NW	7 NW, NW	11 HS, NW		R. 2
4 HS, HS, NW	8 HK, HK, HK	12 HK, HK, HK		







HS, HS, HK

HK, AW

HK, HK, AW

HC, HC, AW, HK

HEK, HEK, AW

6 HEK, HK, HS

7 HS, HS, PG

8 PG, PG, HEK

9 HS, HS, HS, AW

10 AW, PG, PG, PG

11 HEK, PG, HS

12 AK, AK

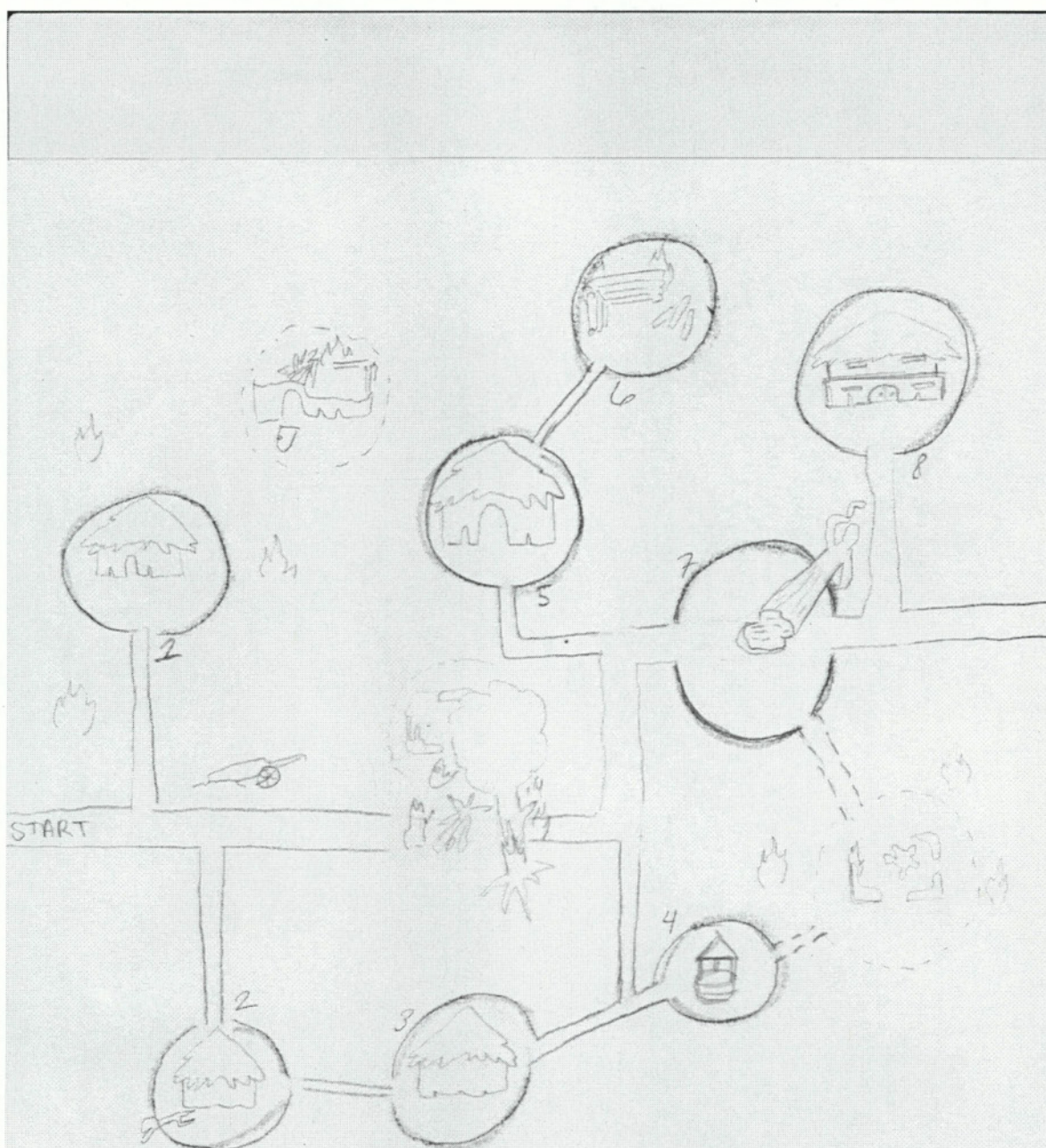
Bos 3 => Continue in book
Rappala, Afi, Rumble,
Rata

Royal Pavilion

Assist

Sed

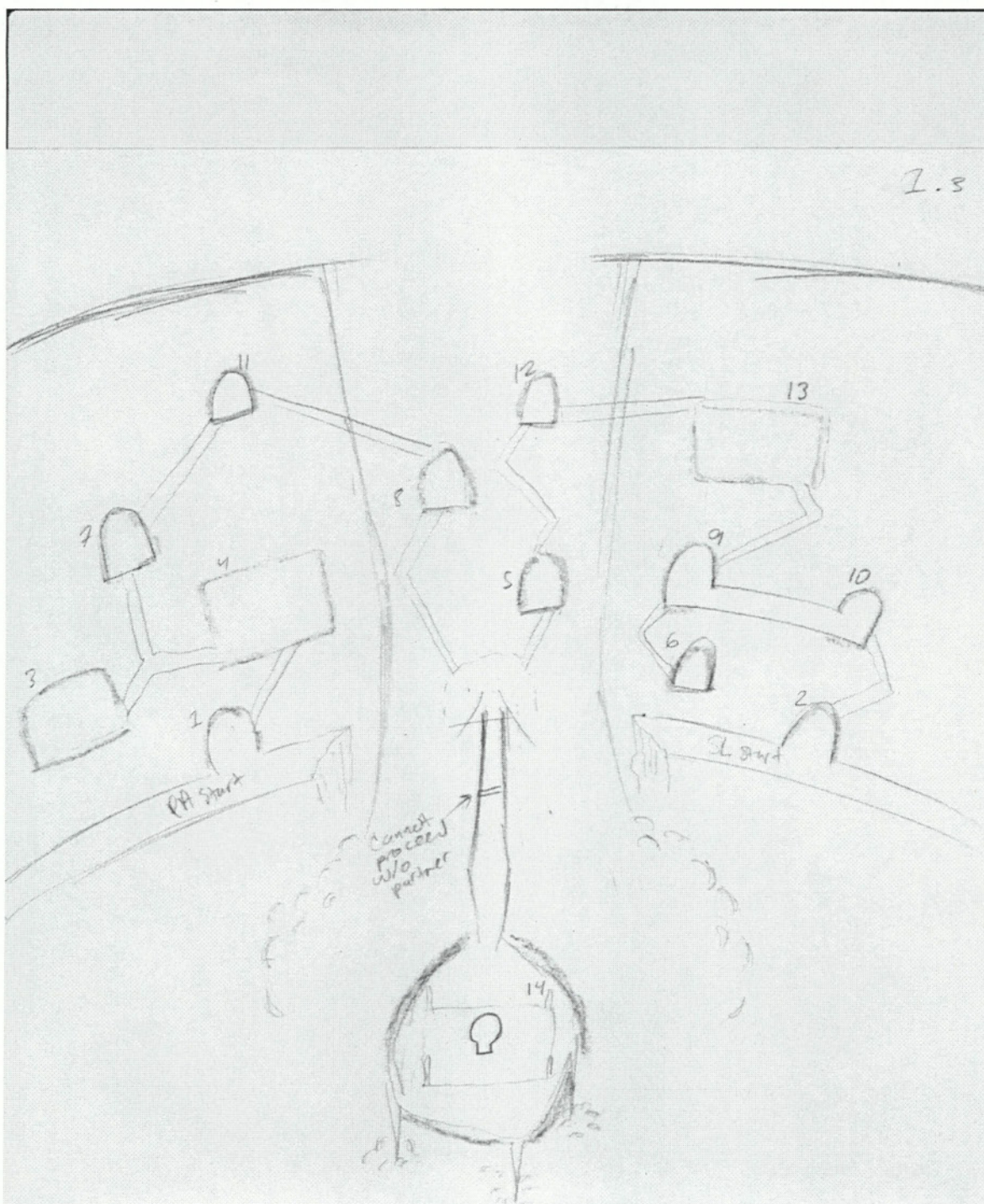
(Boss March)
Sed, Rata, Rumble,
Mu-no



2 GB, GB KB
 2 KB, HGB
 3 CGB, GB, GB
 4 HGB, HGB, GG
 5 KB, HGB, KB

7 GB, KB, HGB, GK
 8 GG, GCA, Whisperer, Mazura

Lament



1 GB, GB
 2 GB, CG
 3 HG, CG, KB
 4 WR, GB
 5

6 KG, CG, CG
 7 KB, GB
 8 CG, HG, KB
 9 GB, KB, GB

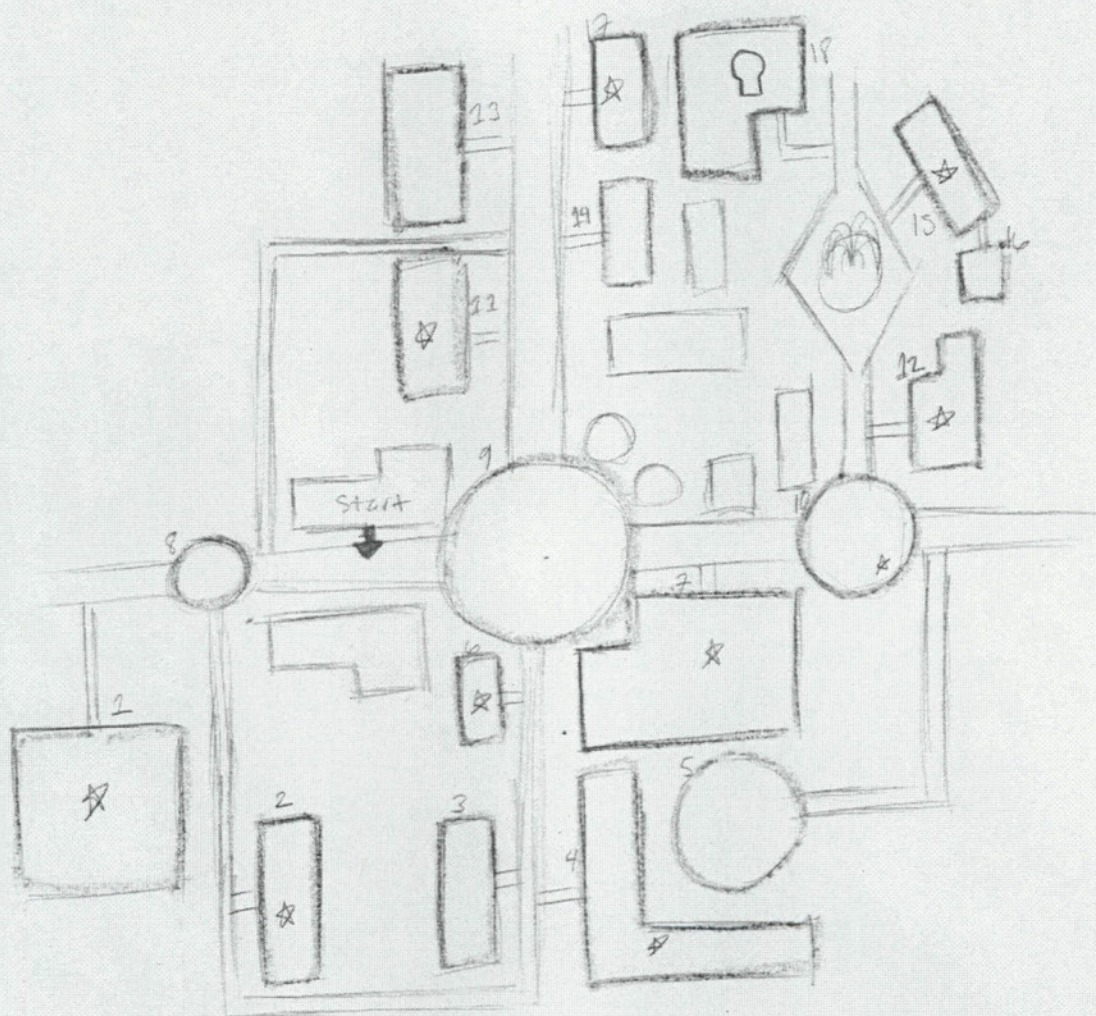
11 HGB, HGB
 12 WR, CG
 13 CG, KB
 14 GK, GK, Faisir

Arrane Falls

Assists - none

Boss Assist - Kar

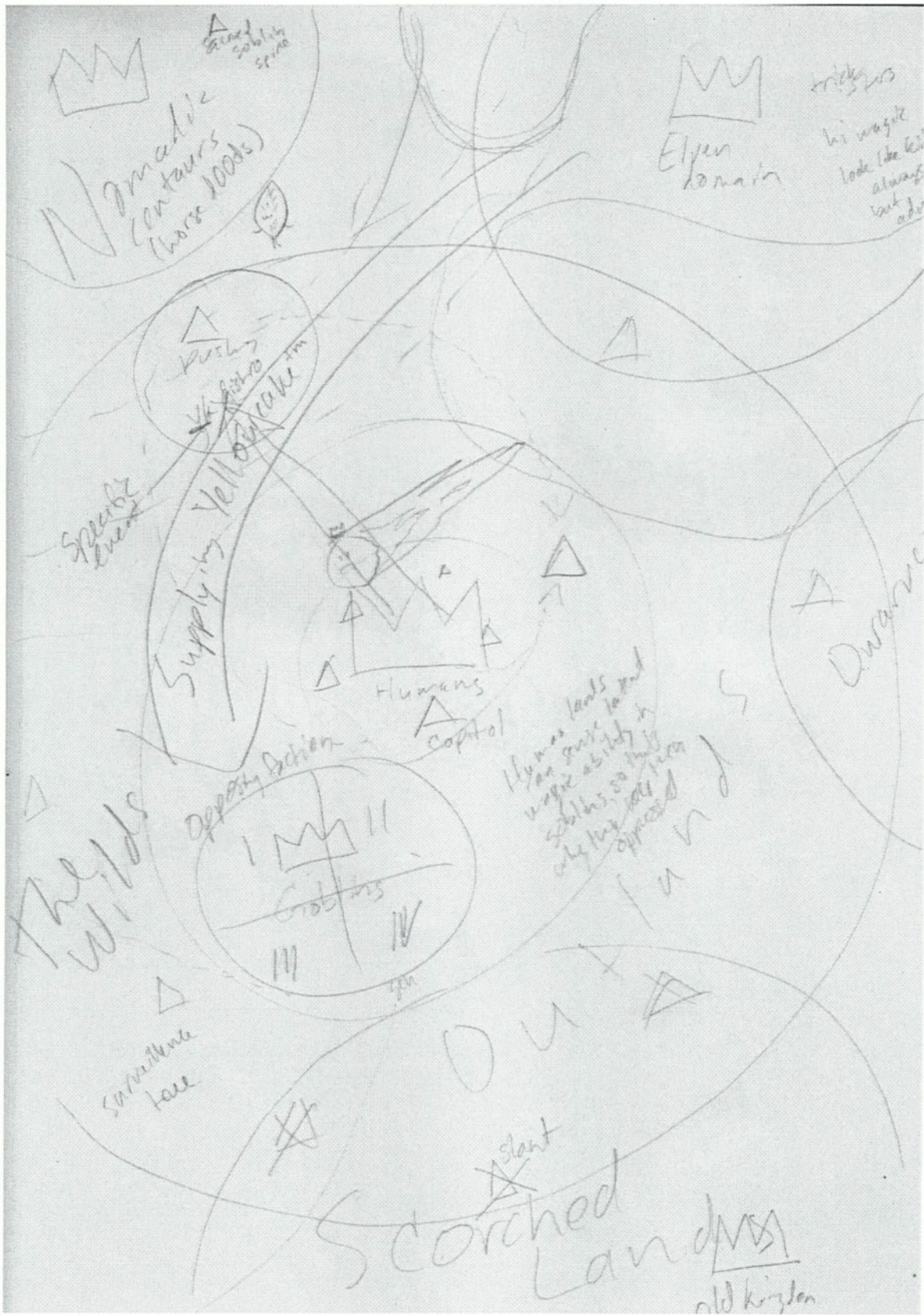
2.2



* = must complete before boss

1 DB, GS, GS, GS	7 GCA, GS, GS, GS, GS	14 KB, HG	Tutorin
2 GG, GS, GS	8 GS, GS, GS, GS	15 GG, HG	Assist
3 KB, GB, CG	9 GCA, GK, GK	16 DB, DB, GCA	Raz
4 GG, GS, KB	10 KB, GCH, GB	17 GB, GB, GB, GCA	Menak
5 WIZ, GCH, GGE	11 GS, GS, KB	18 GAF, GS, GS, GCA	Resistance
	12 WIZ, DB		

Appendix E- Early Concepts and Systems



How did goblins get annexed
+ goblins partnered w/ Citadel got
promised autonomy, now they
are oppressed majority

Also

their queen is dead

PJCT: H

New Streamlined Systems

- weapon determines die mod
- char determines weapon choice
- cards used for skills, augments, effects \Rightarrow boosts attacks $\&$ soon
- phys attacks use no AP, all cards do
- Pusta has lower AP pool but stronger weapons, Slant has higher AP but weaker weapons
- trait: a no-AP cost action that changes when in co-op mode, replaces phys atk in turn
- chars have a def value that must be exceeded to kill them
 - players $\&$ bosses enter a "downed" state after an atk breaks their def

while downed,

if you die in first turn, you can auto saving throw

- a saving throw can be made, if you land a d20 roll of 12 or more, you're back in
- \Rightarrow 20 gets you a second wind, doubles your AP for the next turn
- \Rightarrow 1 is an auto-out
- if enemy lands another def breaking atk, you are out

- loot system revamped
 - more loot for ~~be~~ clearing rooms alone
 - if you are downed, you don't collect loot
 - can't loot?



from certain enemies, you can brew 3 from the world deck $\&$ exchange them w/ cards you own

Test loadouts

one monkey for
losing battles

Pusha

wp giant sword (3d8)
- 2 flying

trail advanced guard
- allows PA to defend
both herself and slant
for 1/2 dmg - or -
allows her to survive one
sword blow per battle

AP 3AP

Def 1/3

Should any be added together?

Goblin
3d4
8

Goblin
2d4+2
8

Kobold
2d6
10

Cursed Goblin
3d6
4

Slant

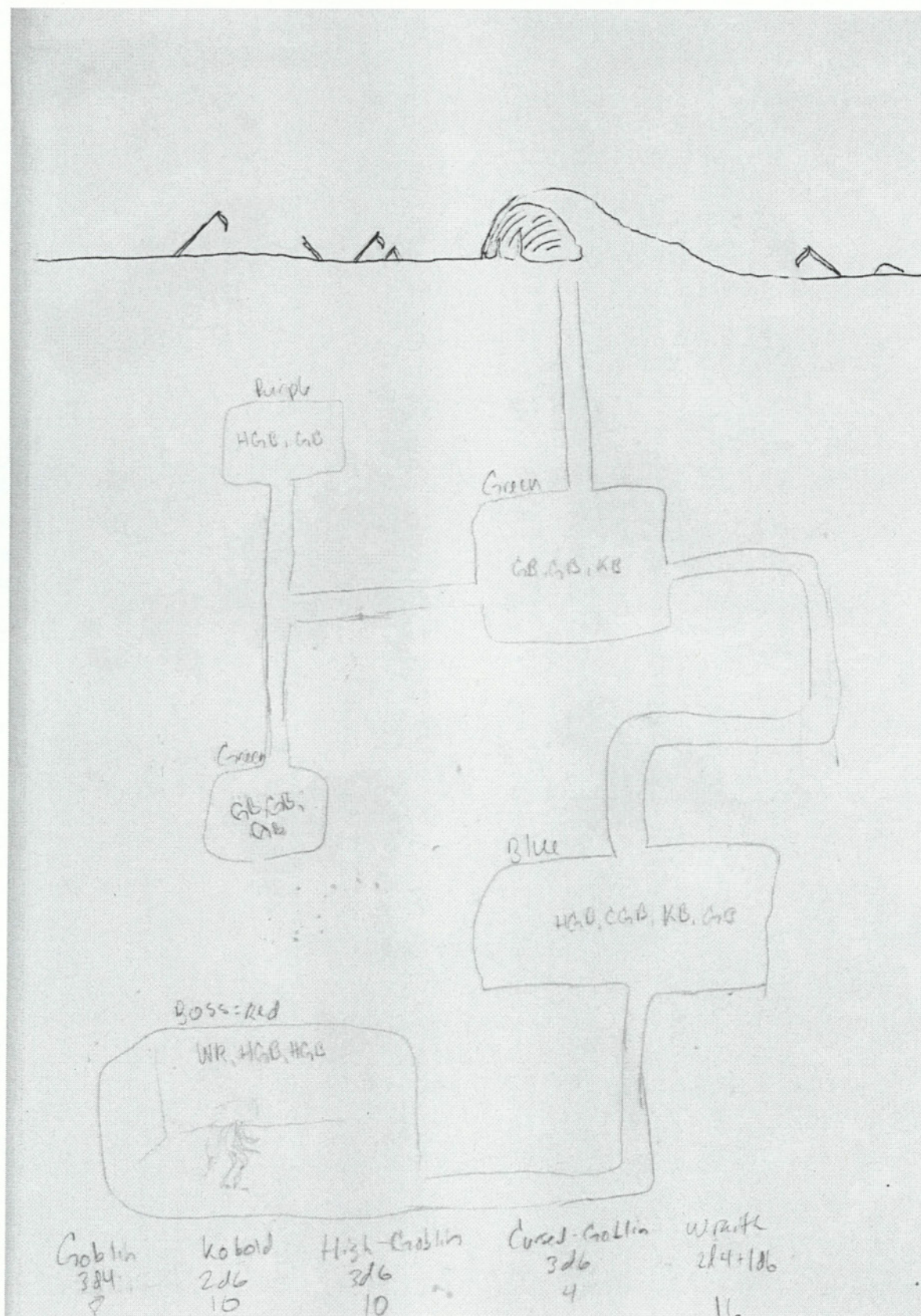
ornate pistol (3d4)
+ 2 flying

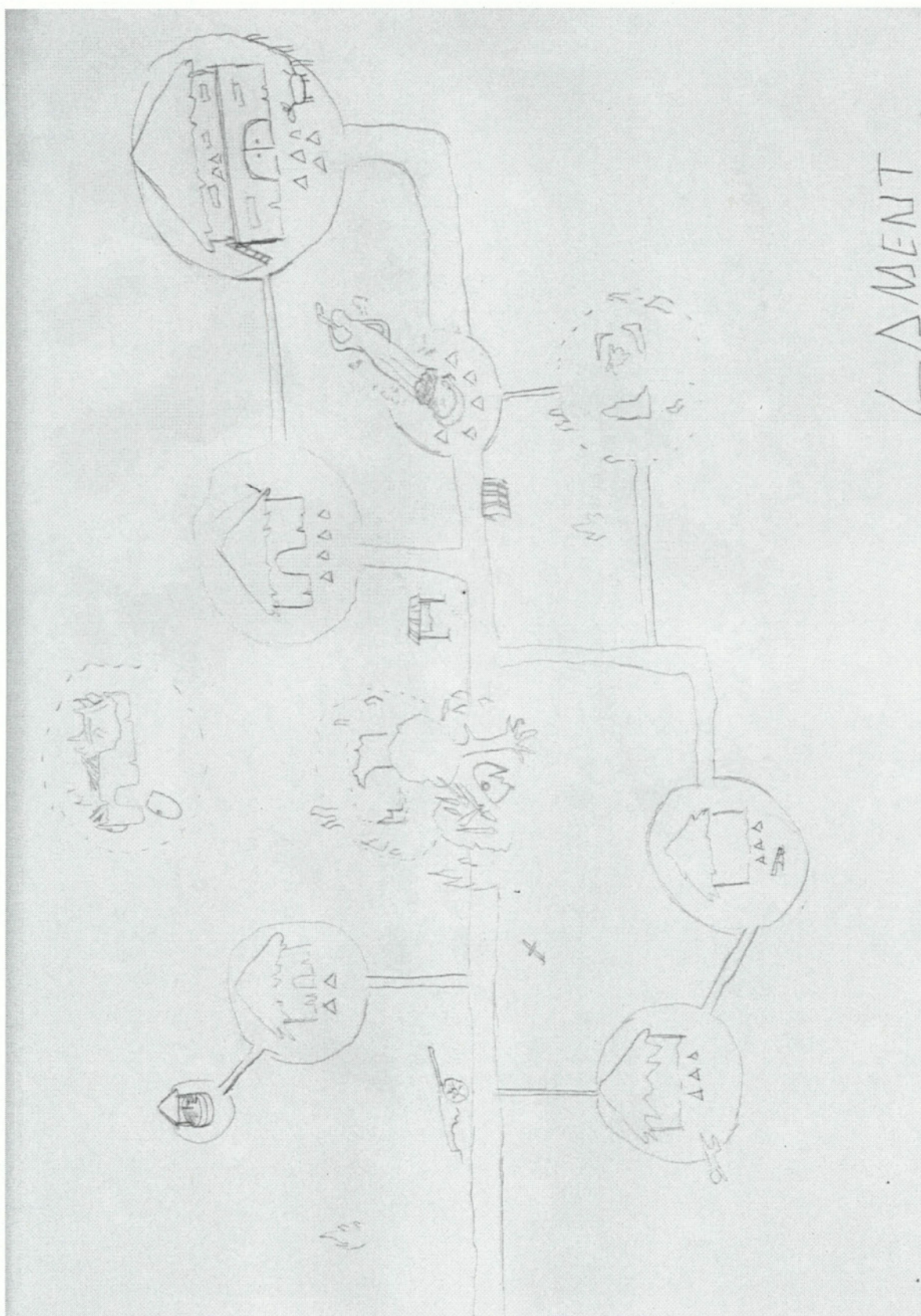
soul charge
- allows SL to buff
PA by 2 die roll - or -
allow her to use one
card for free, foregoing
a w/ use

7AP

11

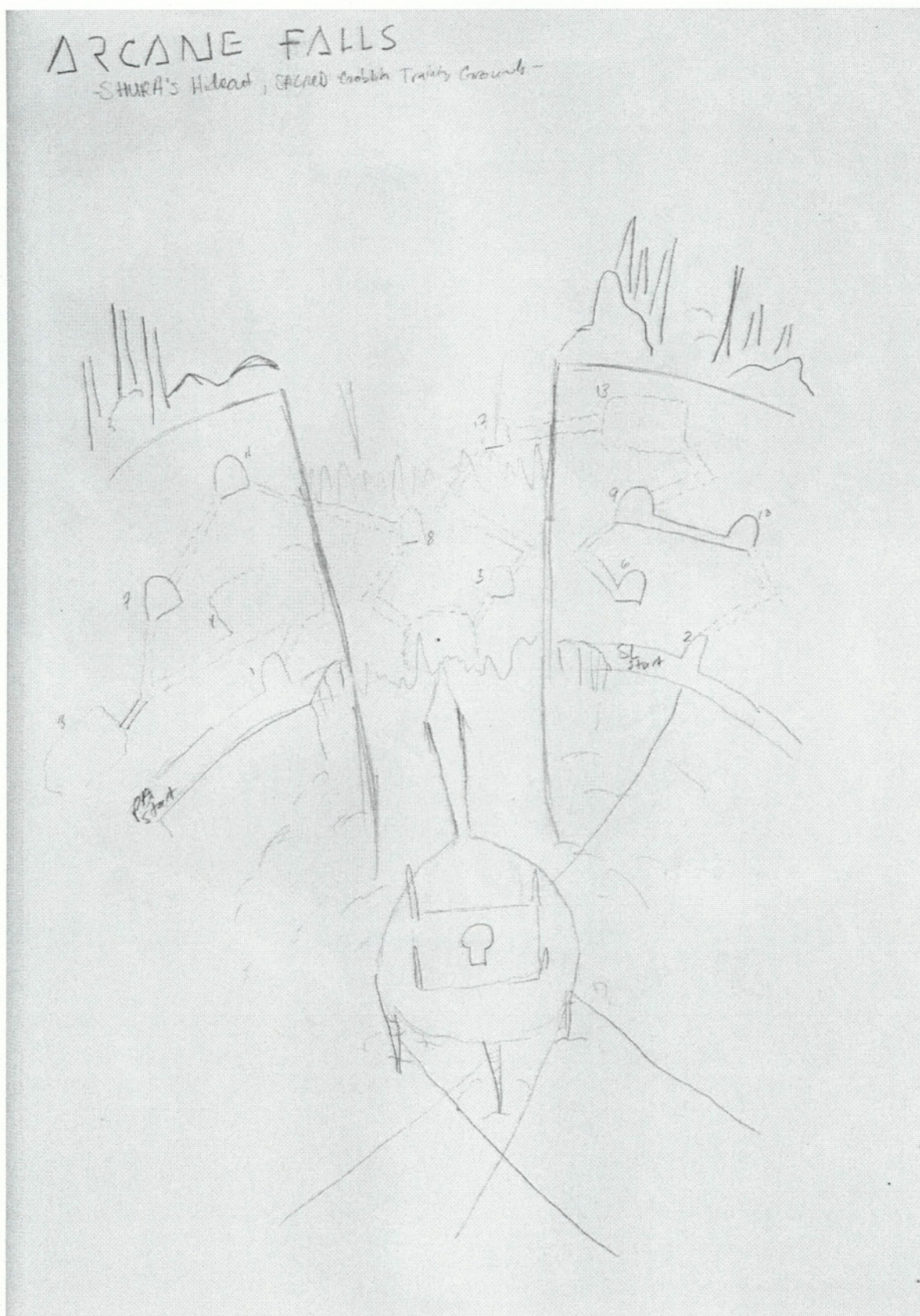
— should AP
system be
reduced?

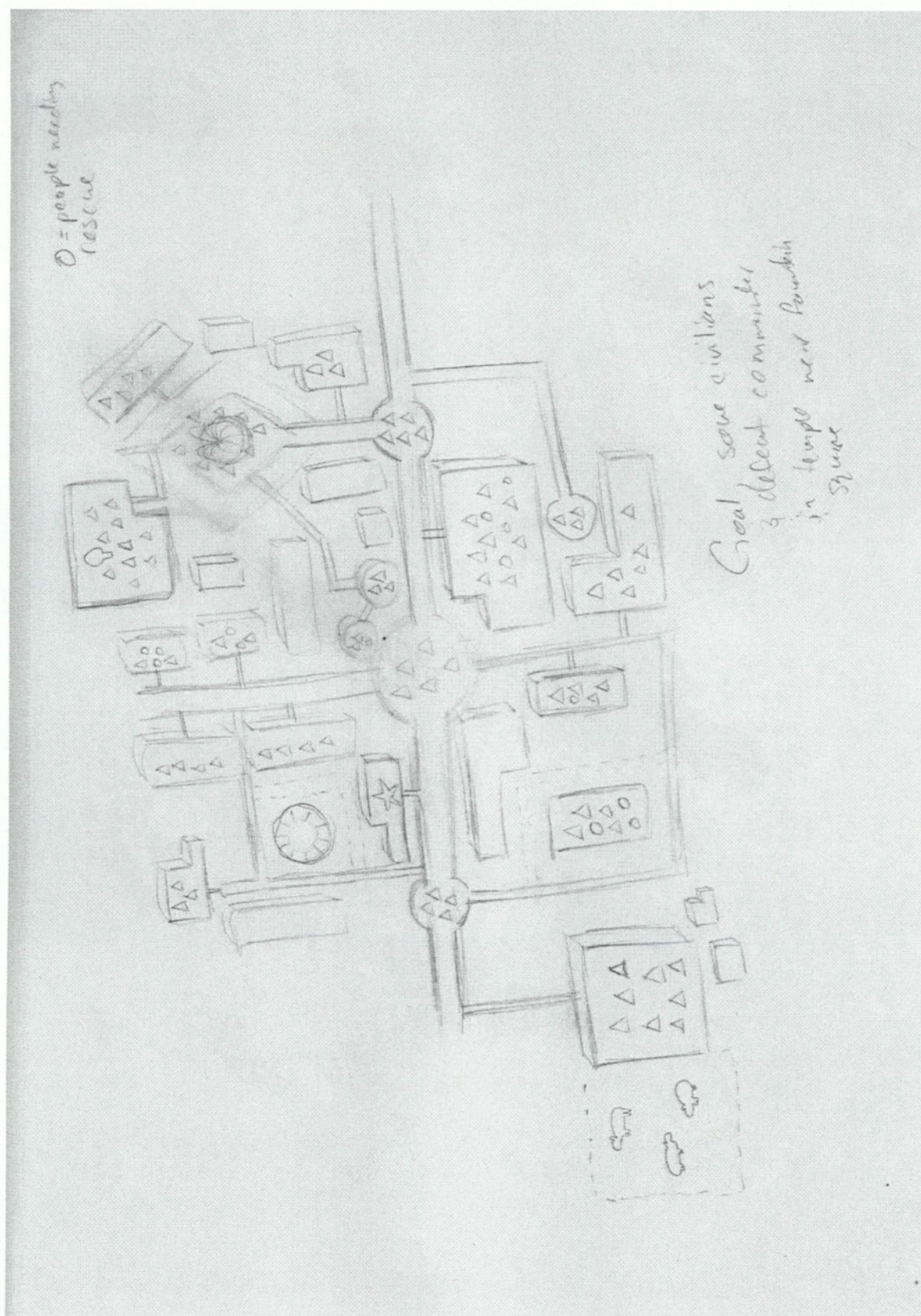




ARCANE FALLS

SHURH's Hideout, GAINED Goblin Train's Grounds-





Thesis proposal



Project: Harmony

Q1



This project will be built upon case studies and notable titles in video and tabletop gaming. Specifically, games that possess social awareness, have an emphasis on story, and/or cooperative gameplay.

The objective of this project is to create a cooperatively tailored experience that broaches social issues relevant to our current society in a meaningful way.

The outcome of this project is a ^{roughly} 3 hours game of content and ~~social~~ relevant research.

Q2

This project will broaden my educational experience by giving me the opportunity to apply what I have learned in TCOM to a different field. I will have the ~~opportunity~~ to stretch my understanding of digital storytelling and production to fit a medium that I am entirely unfamiliar with.

This project will add to my knowledge & develop my talents by providing a chance to combine every skill I have learned as a ~~student~~ ^{graduate} in my team courses. To produce a solid game, I will need to demonstrate skill in composition, storytelling, production, and project management, all of which I have ~~been~~ ^{learned} in various TCOM classes.

Q3 Teens to young adults, and those who ~~transferred~~
who do not often play games with a social conscience.

We expect others to ^{understand} ~~learn~~ the importance of ~~perspective~~
gaming as an academic and socially-aware field.

Project Humanity

Gameplay

card based

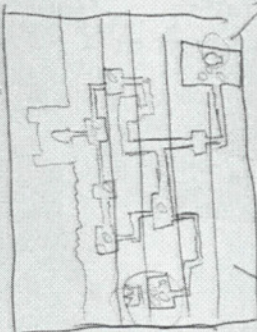
- each player has a deck of cards
- enemies drawn from a deck
- major bosses have a deck similar to a player's deck
- 820 rolls provide damage, do rolls indicate bonus power

Card-based
battle w/
Simple
stats & chances

Dungeons/Temples

- some determined layouts, die determined every in rooms (can see whole layout roll for enemy count?)

Dungeon
buying so down & and
w/loss, temples go
up and have hidden
treasures, but better
than you
with a bottle,
roll for money
acquired, sales
w/ buying
and



bosses drawn
from special
pool, have
special deck
parameters,
more similar
to players

Keys?
locked
doors.
Dungeon
can't enter
every
only on the
floor are
you are
can?

monster "book"

- Contains the kinds of monsters set in area
- describe deck and draw them @ encounter
- some enemies are built
- kinds of enemies
 - attack
 - support
 - boss
 - rare?

deck contents?

- Action cards

- attack
 - weapon based
 - variable power
 - variable effects
- defense/booby
 - if applicable
 - variable success
- utility
 - things like double action on next turn

- HP potions

- 50 cards? maybe!
- you'd pay these to go certain things

PJH

Building a char

- Choosing either Slant or Pusher
 - Changes which classes & weapons one can use
 - Changes your stat focus
 - Affects your HP & SP pool

- Rolling for stats

- Roll 1 d4 to determine stats (POW, INT, DEX, FORT) ^{maybe add Def 3 SP}
- Slant gets +2 to Int & DEX ^{is sp} or +3 to ~~two~~ ² stats
- Pusher gets +2 to POW & FORT ^{DEF} or +3 to ~~two~~ ² stats

Why stats matter?

- Certain enemies may impose effects onto the player based on the stats
- Certain stats may be required to use weapons or items

Enemies & stats

- enemies use a simplified stat system
- normal enemies "interact" w/ one stat (ex: mind breaker affects those w/ low FORT)

Classes

Slant

Battle Mage → solid offense &
 magic capability
 knives, short sword,
 shields
~~low defense~~
 - below average
 defense

Rogue → acrobatic and dangerous
 assassin
 daggers,
 short sword
 - low dmg, high speed,
 high crit

Wizard → talented and versatile
 magic user
 amulets
 staff
 accessories
 dagger
 - SP boost
 - low physical ability, strong
 mind

Rusha

Wanderer → reliable offense?
 defense ability
 all swords,
 all shields
 knives
 - average magic affinity

Punisher → melee based warrior
 gauntlets
 high mental fortitude,
 low defense

Paladin → blessed knight,
 all swords
 all shields
 in inspiration to all
 → FORT boost
 → Holy magic affinity

Weapons → Equipped weapon determines the attack cards one can use (weapons also have stat buffs & penalties)
weight = ★ → rating determines which classes can use it;

Melee

Shortsword → ★★
+1 def

Longsword → ★★
-2 DEX
+2 POW
+2 DEF

Grand sword → ★★
+5 POW
-3 DEX
+1 SPD

dagger → ★
+2 DEX
+2 SPD

Shields

Small circular →
+2 def
-2 dex

Knights →
+4 def
-2 SPD
-2 dex

Giant →
+8 def
-4 SPD
-3 dex

Ranged

magic pistol → ★
+2 INT
+2 SPD

throwing knives → ★
+2 DEX
-1 POW
+2 SPD

grand boomerang → ★★
★ can be thrown or used

longed
- multi hit
chance

melee
+3 POW } unknown
-3 dex } weapon

Accessories

Amulets → variable stat buff
HP buff
SP/INT buff

Curse
- may be worn, but @ great cost,
usually has strong OP buff

Game Flow

Story beat

↓
Choice

↓
Result

↓
dungeon

↓
Boss

↓
New world
recovery of
artifact

build
deck

failure

Battle Flow

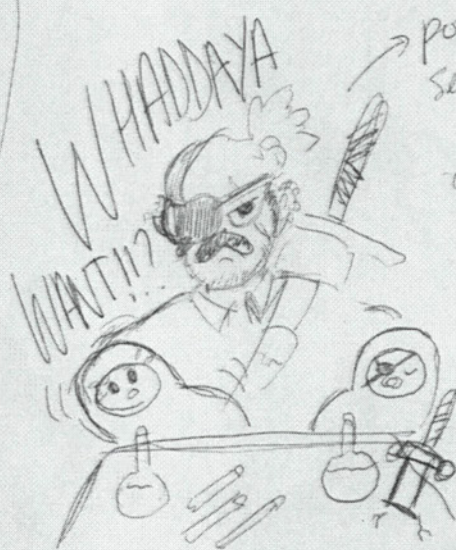
Acquire
cards

↓
build deck

↓
battle (Draw, Action, ???)

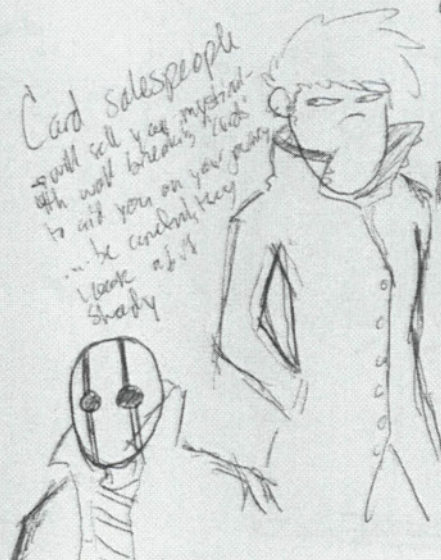
↓
battle result

↓
acquire
money

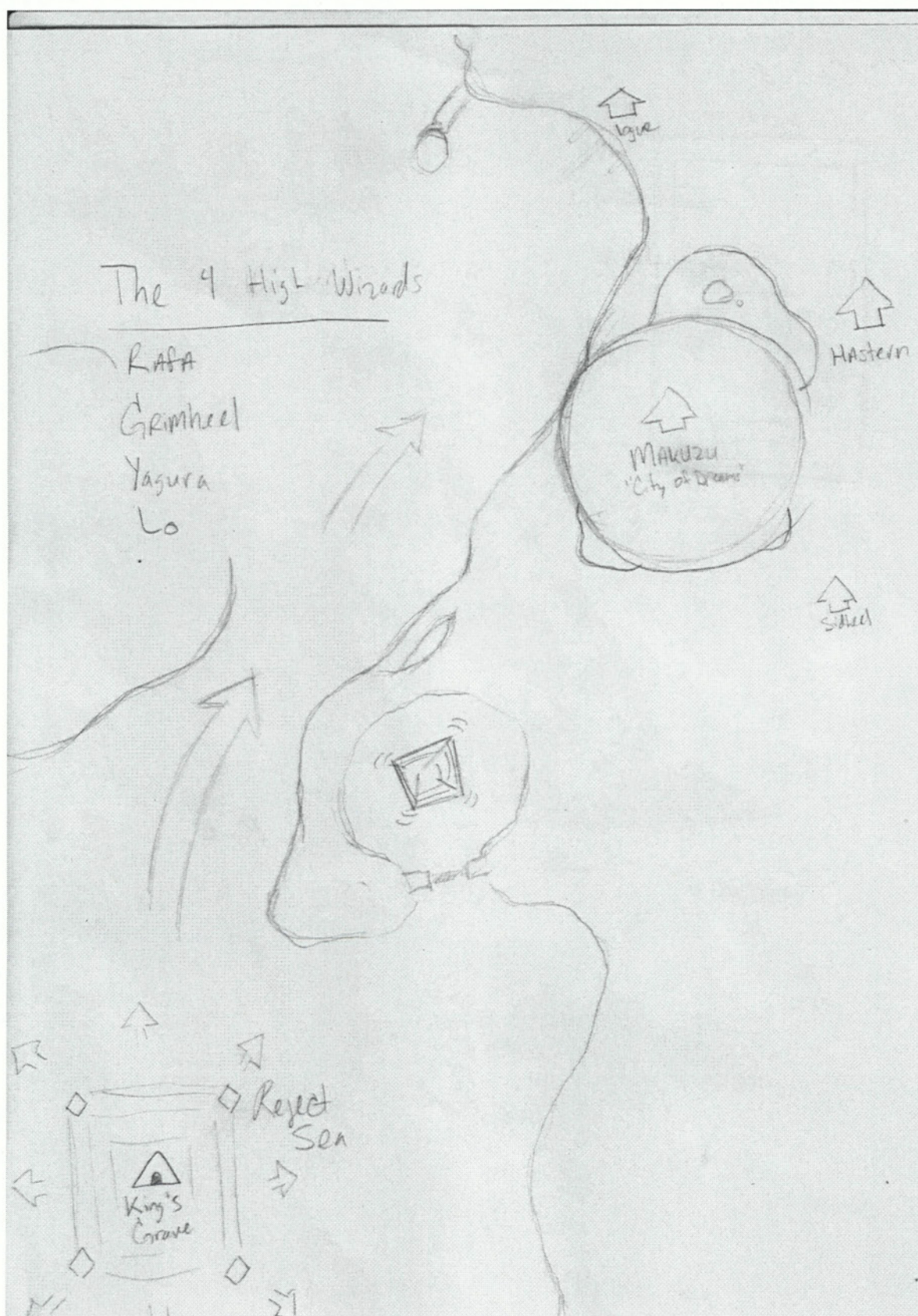


→ potion master
(Rolando Bachi)
sells consumable
items, unlike
cards, these can
be used freely
during battle, but
don't so constitutes
the action phase
at your turn?
you can only use
one

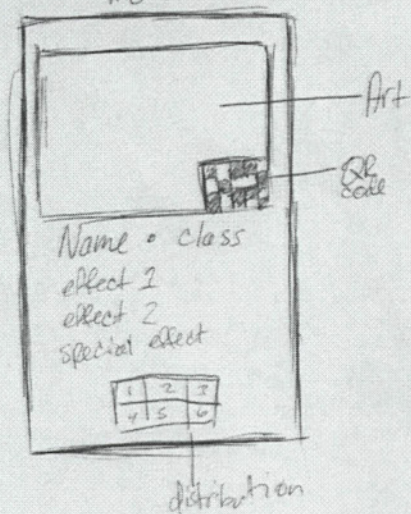
Card salespeople
will sell you mystical
cards that break your
to add you on your journey
... be careful they
are shady







Card designs monster card



Red → ATK
Blue → Def/Counter
Green → support/Healing

	S	Bosses	} Rare
	A	main boss	
	B	mini boss	
1/4 1/6	C	strong	
2/4	D		
1/4	E	weak	
	F	Npcs w/ no abilities	

extra complicated

Deck structure

25 cards

Bash Atk → 1d6 Atk

Slash Atk → 1d6

Pierce → 2d4

"Shield"

→ Monster Skill → When a monster has the ability to block or counter, roll for that action when you attempt to attack them. This counts for their turn

Counter

Roll 2 d20, first roll is the player's, second is the monster's. The higher roll wins

If roll is successful: does 1d4 damage

unsuccessful: you take dmg

crit roll: deal 1d4 dmg + one action

bolley you take 1mg + 1d4

"Ex" Skills

Ex skills mean the roll is doubled

Inaction

"/" denotes that the monster does not act during this turn

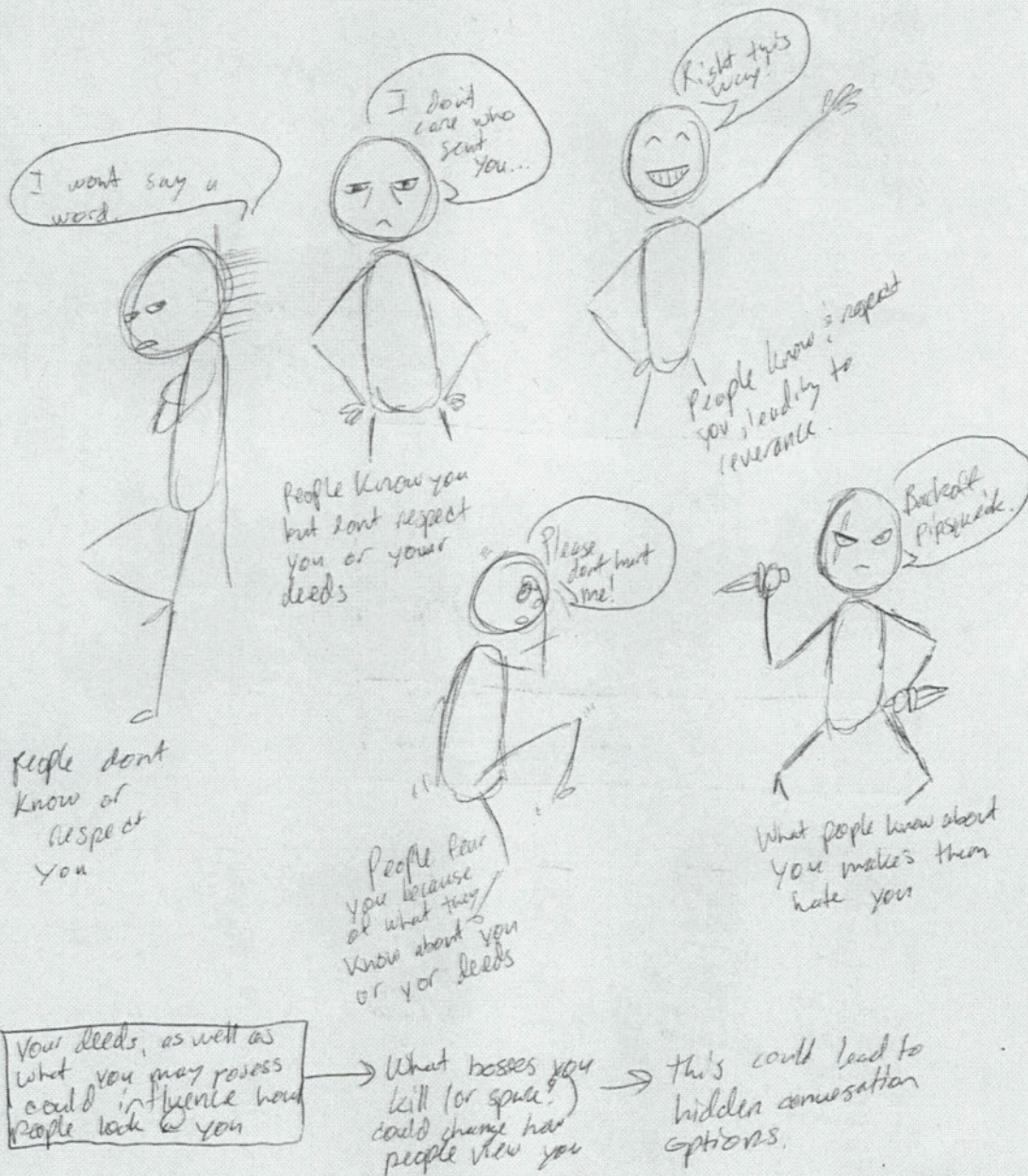
USNC

Social System

2-3 stats max

Respect → people's opinion of you (accomplishments, race, occupation)

Notoriety → people's awareness of your deeds & their opinion of them
(important if you are a morally grey char)

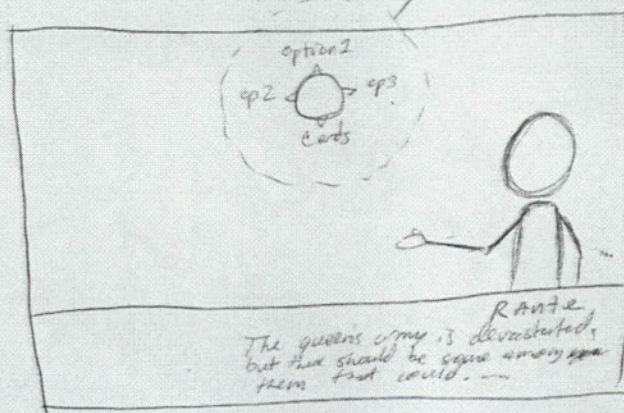


IN Addition

Certain cards
you may have
could unlock
dialogue
options

Interaction
order could
change what
they say to you

maybe how you interact w/
people can affect your
SOC stats



talking to the
right person
could reveal
where to use
a key item



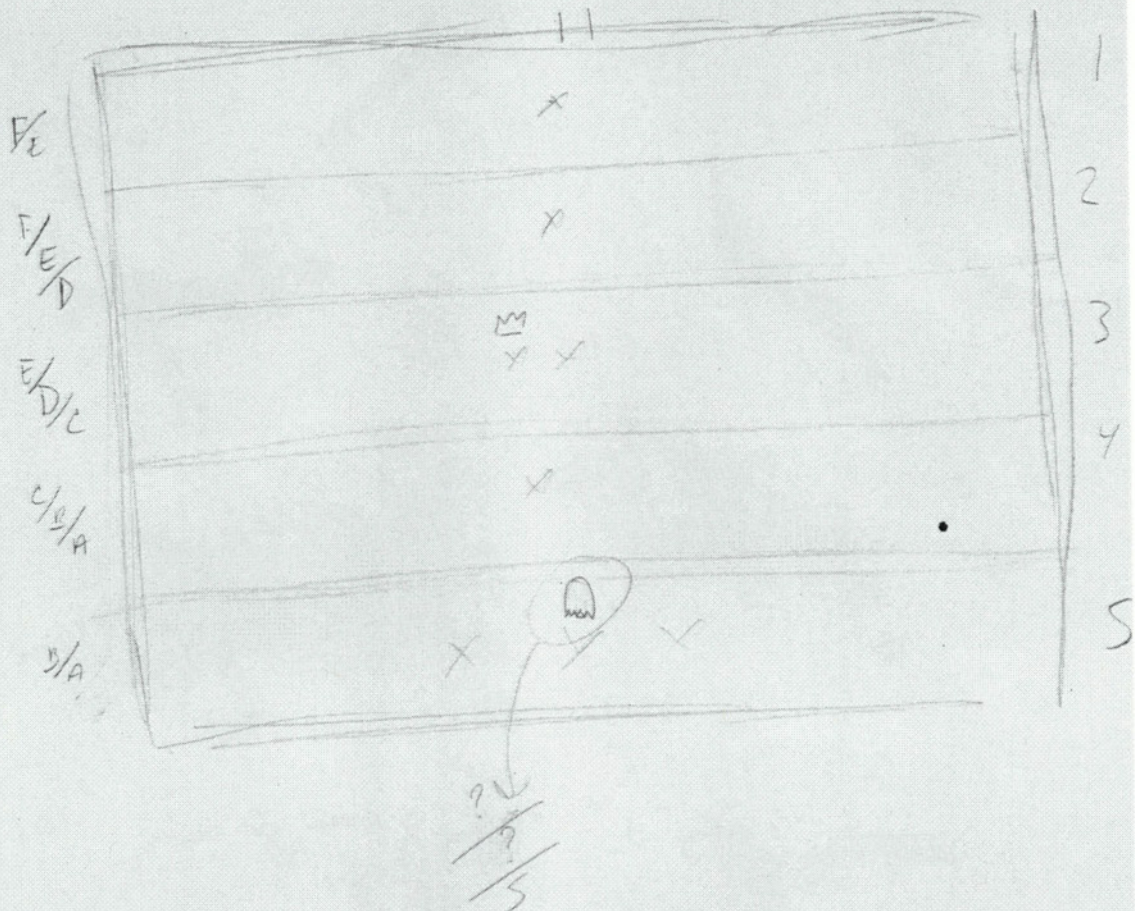
maybe you
can find
things for
things?



maybe you
might find
something
that
someone
needs



certain actions
might be
recognized
by char



F/E	{		124
			124
D/C/B	{		124+126
			226
A/S-			226